

Grandmaster Repertoire

Marian
Petrov
**The
Modern
Benoni**



Tired of bad positions? Try the main lines!

QUALITY CHESS



The Modern Benoni

by Marian Petrov

The Modern Benoni arises after 1.d4 \square f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6. It leads to unbalanced structures and exciting play, so it has naturally been a favourite of ambitious attacking players such as Tal, Fischer and, more recently, Topalov, Ivanchuk and Gashimov.

The Modern Benoni is a bold answer to 1.d4 and GM Marian Petrov shows it is possible to play this line confidently without memorizing extreme levels of theory. Black must certainly be well prepared, but the workload is less than for most aggressive defences – this book supplies all Black needs to know.

- *Expert guidance on an exciting counterattacking line*
- *Fight against 1.d4 with a concise effective repertoire*
- *Hundreds of novelties*

Marian Petrov is a grandmaster and former Bulgarian Champion. He has great experience in the Modern Benoni and has used it successfully in many international events.

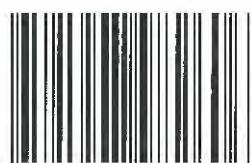
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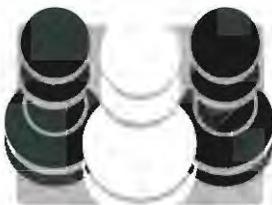
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Grandmaster Repertoire 12

The Modern Benoni

By

Marian Petrov



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GRANDMASTER REPERTOIRE 12 – THE MODERN BENONI

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Key to symbols used

+	White is slightly better
=	Black is slightly better
+	White is better
+	Black is better
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	equality
≡	with compensation
⇄	with counterplay
?	unclear
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!?	a move of doubtful value
#	mate

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Introduction

By the Author

Welcome to the Modern Benoni, one of the most dynamic openings in all of chess. Make no mistake: this book is for players who enjoy the wild and adventurous side of the game. Modern Benoni devotees are forced to play on the edge, and will often have to live with positional weaknesses and/or sacrifice material to avoid being driven into passivity. On the plus side Black gets active piece play with rich counterattacking possibilities, perhaps more so than in any other opening against 1.d4.

The Benoni got its name from a German manuscript published in 1825 entitled *Ben-Oni*. For the rest of the 19th century it was rarely seen and had a poor reputation. Then in the early 1900s it was adopted by a few maestros of the day, most notably Frank Marshall. Even the great Alekhine played it a few times, despite having stated it was not a good opening. It was not until the late 1950s that the Modern Benoni really became popular, thanks to the great Mikhail Tal. The Benoni, with all its dynamism and counterattacking potential, suited Tal's aggressive tactical style perfectly. His games say more than my words ever could, so let's whet our appetites by seeing a couple of them.

Bukhuti Gurgenidze – Mikhail Tal

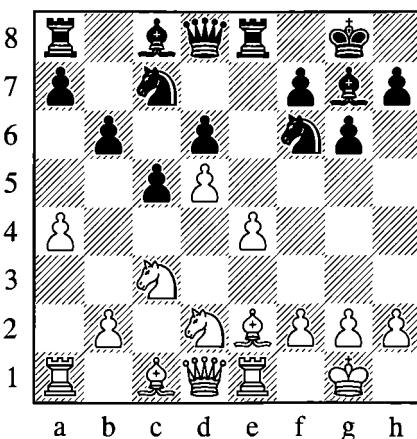
Moscow 1957

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♘f3 g6 7.e4 ♜g7 8.♗e2 0–0 9.0–0

Gurgenidze employs the Classical System, which can be found in Chapters 7 and 8.

9...♝e8 10.♘d2 ♜a6 11.♗e1 ♜c7 12.a4 b6

At this stage it is hard to predict where Black's counterplay will come from, but just watch how quickly the situation changes.

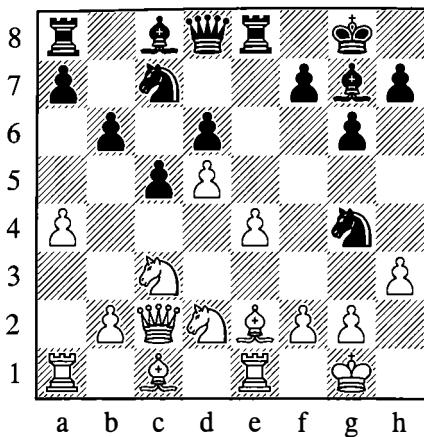


13.♕c2

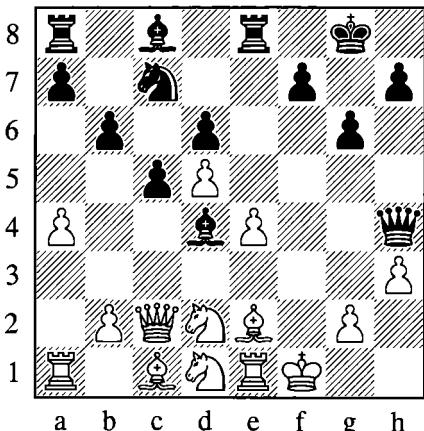
Nowadays the main move is 13.f4.

13...♝g4! 14.h3?

White must have been asking himself where the knight could be going. Playing against Tal, perhaps he should have been more cautious.

**14...♞xf2!!**

A brilliant combination! Suddenly White's king is in grave danger.

15.♗xf2 ♕h4† 16.♗f1 ♔d4 17.♗d1**17...♝xh3!**

Taking on h3 with the bishop is promising, but doing it with the queen is so much stronger, not to mention spectacular.

18.♗f3

18.gxh3? ♔xh3 is mate of course.

18...♛h2 19.♗e3 f5!

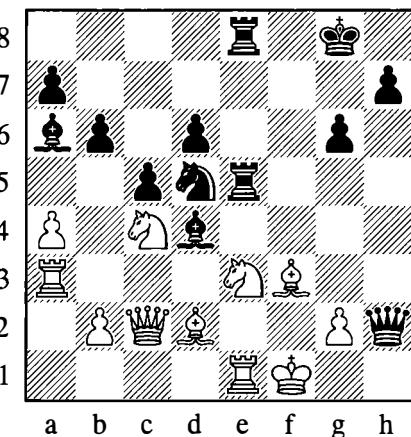
The quote from *The Lord of the Rings*, “Even the smallest person can change the course of the future”, applies just as much to pawns as it does to hobbits.

20.♗dc4 fxe4 21.♗xe4 ♔a6!

The bishop finds a perfect home. There are too many pins, open files and diagonals for White to deal with.

22.♗f3 ♔e5 23.♗a3 ♔ae8 24.♗d2 ♗xd5!

An excellent demonstration of team play. After the earlier sacrifice Tal has simply brought his pieces to good squares and the white position soon crumbles to dust.

**25.♗xd5† ♔xd5 26.♗e2 ♔xe3 27.♗xe3 ♔xc4†**

0–1

Any player would be proud to win such a game, and Tal's play from 1957 showed he was way ahead of his time. No wonder his opponents became scared to sit down opposite him before a game! Here is one more game from the following year.

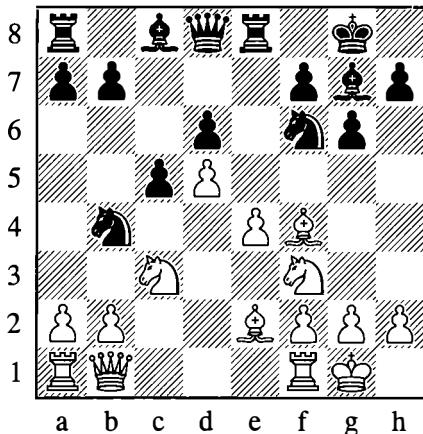
Yuri Averbakh – Mikhail Tal

Riga 1958

**1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5
6.e4 g6 7.♗e2 ♜g7 8.♘f3 0-0 9.0-0 ♜e8
10.♗c2 ♜a6 11.♗f4 ♜b4**

Another knight attack, this time from the other side.

12.♗b1



12...♘xe4!?

This move must have come as a huge psychological shock to Averbakh. In fact it is not fully correct, but over the board it caused problems that were too much for White to handle. The fact that Black can even contemplate giving up a piece in this way says something about the wealth of possibilities offered by the Benoni.

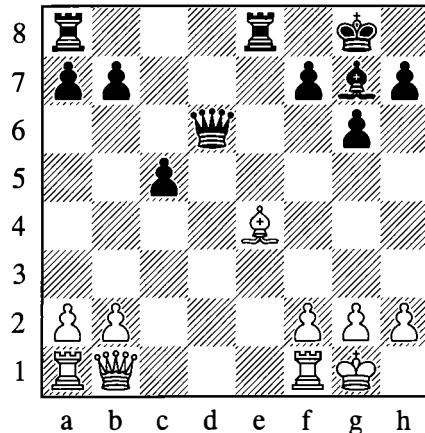
13.♘xe4 ♜f5 14.♗fd2 ♜xd5 15.♗xd6?

15.♗g3 would have made it harder for Black to prove his compensation.

15...♗f6 16.♗f3 ♜xe4 17.♗xe4 ♜xe4

18.♗xe4 ♜xd6

Black has emerged a pawn up with a more active position.



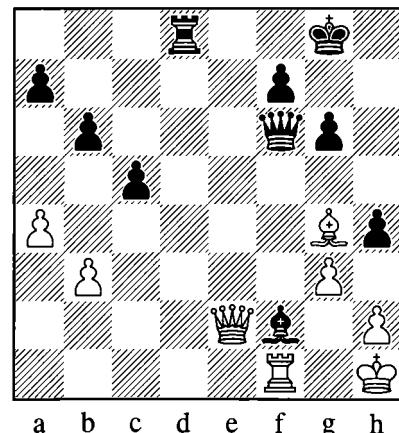
19.♗c2 ♜e7 20.♗f3 ♜ae8 21.♗ad1

The opposite-coloured bishops give White realistic drawing possibilities, so it is interesting to observe how Tal breaks the defence.

**21...♗d4 22.a4 b6 23.b3 ♜e5 24.♗d2 h5
25.♗e2 ♜xe2 26.♗xe2 h4 27.♗h1 ♜f4 28.g3
♗f6 29.♗d1 ♜d8 30.♗g4?**

Under heavy pressure, White commits a fatal oversight.

30.♗xf2! 31.♗e2



31...♗d2!!

It is only fitting that the game is decided by tactics.

32.♕e8†

32.♕xd2 ♜c6† leads to mate.

32...♔g7 33.gxh4 ♜d4 34.♔h3 ♜d3 35.♔g2 ♜d1

0–1

About this book

I have been playing the Modern Benoni for about a decade. Before then I played the King's Indian, so it was a natural transition as I was already used to having my bishop on g7. For my own reasons I have usually preferred the move order 1.d4 g6, intending to transpose to a Benoni after a subsequent c2-c4. Of course I understand most readers will prefer a more conventional move order, so I have taken the position after the standard moves 1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 as my starting point for the book.

A friend of mine once told me “Every time when I see your pawn on d6 it makes me sick!” However, he also admitted he wished he could get such interesting positions from the black side of the Queen's Gambit Declined, which is his favoured defence. The thing I like about the Modern Benoni is that it almost always gives rise to a tense position where both players must make concrete decisions. I have also observed that there are many players who do not enjoy facing the Benoni, as White finds it hard to control the game the way he often does in most 1.d4 openings.

In this book I have departed slightly from the strict ‘repertoire approach’ of giving one recommendation against each of the opponent’s options. Against most major options I have provided coverage of two or more lines; the Benoni is a versatile beast and I hope the reader will find it useful to have multiple weapons in his arsenal. In some cases I have even spent time covering a less promising alternative, in order to provide some theoretical background and highlight the reasons that led me not to recommend something different. No doubt some readers would argue in favour of a more detailed ‘one recommendation’ approach, but I am happy with the final balance of detail versus choices. I also made the decision to focus my attention on the most popular and critical attempts for White to handle each major variation. In almost every early position there are probably ten or more uncommon moves that have been played at some point, but does anyone really need a recommendation against every possible move that they’re unlikely ever to face?

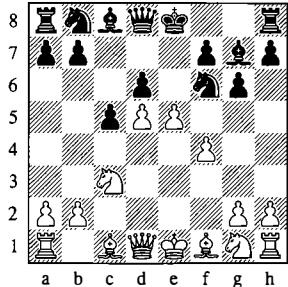
I hope you will enjoy reading this book and putting its recommendations into practice. Remember one thing: the Modern Benoni is not an opening that can be played by book alone. Preparation has its place of course, but more important are the resolve, wit and ingenuity of the brave warrior who puts his pawns on c5 and d6. Thus I invite you to summon your inner Tal, turn the page and get started.

Marian Petrov
Burgas, Bulgaria
February 2013

Chapter 1

f4 Systems

Mikenas Attack



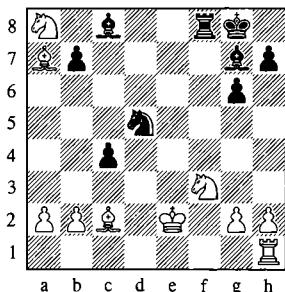
Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f4

7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8.e5

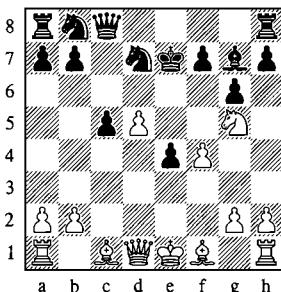
A) 8...dxe5	10
B) 8... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ dxe5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$	12
B1) 13.f5	14
B11) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6N$	14
B12) 13...e4!	15
B2) 13.fxe5	17

A) note to 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$



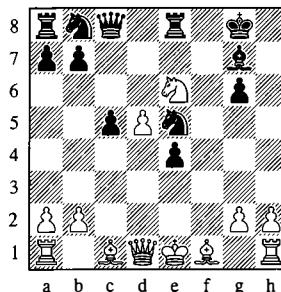
23... $\mathbb{Q}g4!N$

B) note to 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$



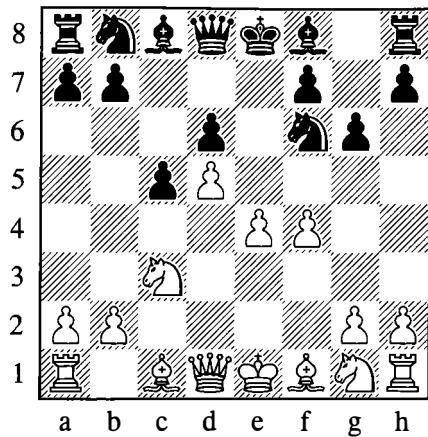
b) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d4?N$

B12) after 18. $\mathbb{Q}e6$



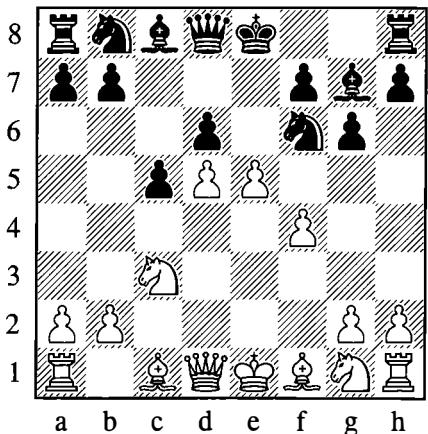
18... $\mathbb{Q}bc6!!N$

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f4



The first six chapters of the book will focus on this aggressive continuation, which continues to be a source of headaches for a lot of Benoni players.

7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8.e5

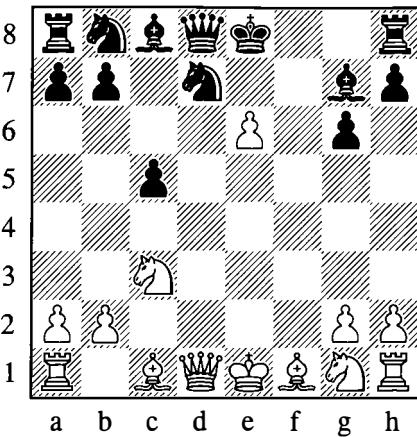


This is known as the Mikenas Attack. It is rarely played, but Black should be prepared. The two main replies are A) 8...dxe5 and B) 8... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$.

A) 8...dxe5

This is an acceptable choice for players who don't wish to study long variations.

9.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 10.e6 fxe6 11.dxe6

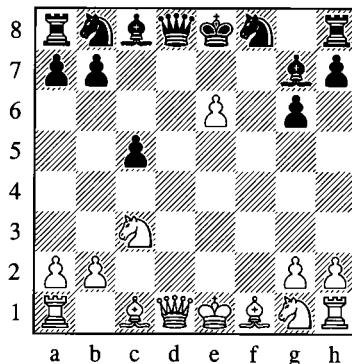


11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Now White must go into an endgame. I believe this is the best move, although I will mention three other options:

The tempting 11... $\mathbb{W}h4\#?$ does not work:
12.g3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 13.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ (13... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0–0 16.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g7\pm$) 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xe2\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16.e7± White has good compensation.

11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ occurred in Alfonso Nogue – Almeida Quintana, Badalona 2009. Here White has a natural improvement:



12. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#N$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15.0–0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$

Finally there is:

11... $\mathbb{W}e7$

This has been the most popular move, but I don't like it much.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

Now you must enter a long forced line:

12... $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xe2\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 0–0

14... $\mathbb{Q}e5?$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$

15. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

20. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ a6= 21. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe5??$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5\pm$

Shereshevski – Semeniuk, Vilnius 1974.

After the text move Black needs to fight hard just to stay in the game, while White has many ways to stay a piece up for one or two pawns.

17... $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$

17... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}ed3\#$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

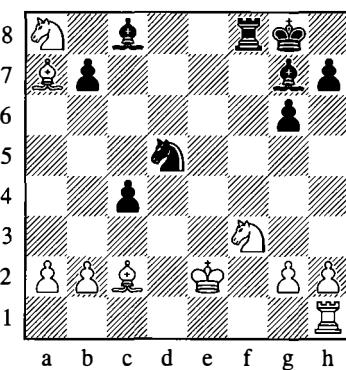
20. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ c4

23. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$

26.h4±

18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c4 21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

$\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$



23... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ N

I prefer this over 23... $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$ as played in Marcotulli – Fredriksen, e-mail 2002.

24. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}f4\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

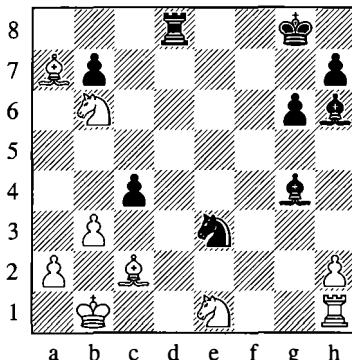
25. $\mathbb{Q}f2?$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$

28. $\mathbb{Q}xc4\#$

25... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$

28. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 29.b3

29.h3? $\mathbb{Q}f5\pm$



29... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$

29... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}d1\#$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7\#$

32. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$

35. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1\pm$

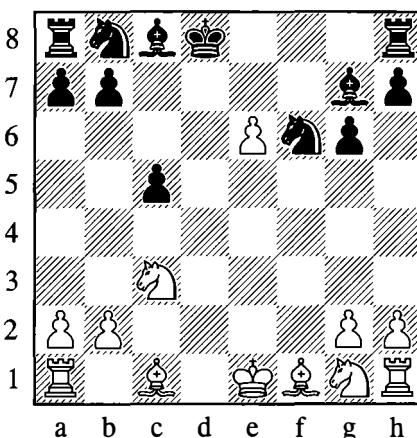
30. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$

Black keeps a playable position, but overall I don't find this line particularly appealing.

12. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$

12. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$? $\mathbb{Q}c6$ favours Black.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$

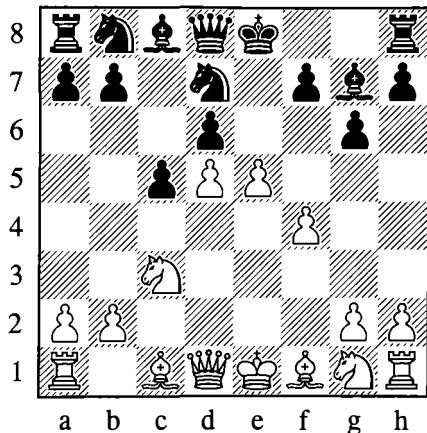


13. $\mathbb{Q}e3N$

13. $\mathbb{Q}g5?$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 14.0–0–0–0 $\#$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ h6 left White struggling to demonstrate compensation in Moehring – Hesse, Annaberg-Buchholz 1965.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5=$

The queenless middlegame is balanced.

B) 8... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 

This is the main line, and leads to more complex play.

9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ dx e 5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ is the same.

9.e6?! is worse: 9...fx e 6 10.dx e 6 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ d5 12. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}e7\#$) 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ This position occurred in Kratochvil – Hradecky, Frydek Mistek 2005, and now 13... $\mathbb{W}e7!N$ would have left Black clearly better.

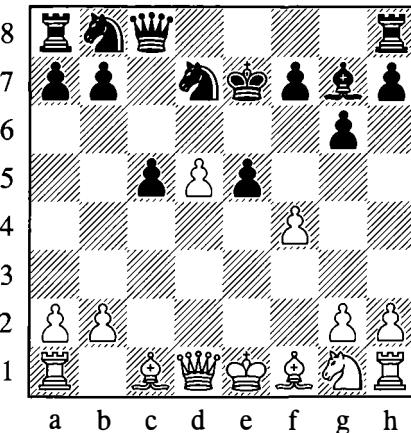
Finally, 9.ex d 6 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7=$ is not dangerous.

9...dx e 5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$

In return for the sacrificed pawn White has managed to give an early check, forcing our king to stay in the centre for a while.

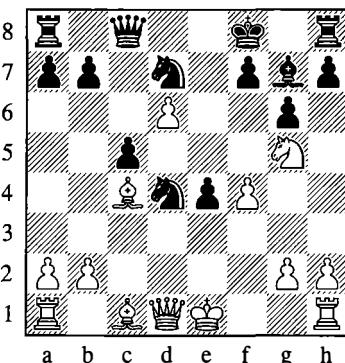
10... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc8\#$

11. $\mathbb{Q}b5?$ is deservedly rare: 11... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 12.d6 $\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ For some reason the natural 13... $\mathbb{W}h4\#!N$ has not been played so far, but it brings Black a clear advantage as shown after: 14.g3 (14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8\#$) 14...ex f 4 $\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ fx g 3 $\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ gx h 2 $\#$

11... $\mathbb{W}xc8$ **12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$**

White needs to catch up on development.

12.d6 $\#$? is premature: 12... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 17.0–0 ex f 4 $\#$ Nogues – Bertorello, Villa Martelli 2008.) 14...e4 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ The counterattack is not working.



16... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ h6 18. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ hx g 5 19.fx g 5 $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$ Maiorov – Marcotulli, e-mail 2002.

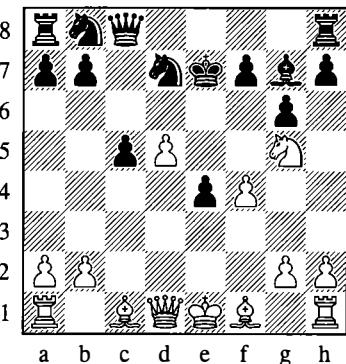
12... $\mathbb{W}e8$

This is the main move, but there are a couple of promising alternatives.

12...e4?

Keeping the e- and f-files closed is a rare but nice idea which seems to work well.

13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



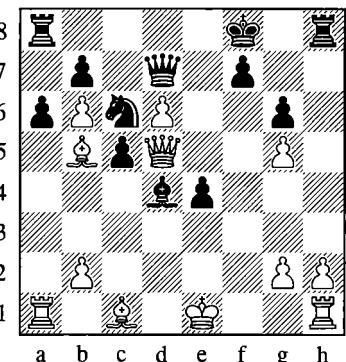
Few games have reached this position, so there is room to explore. Black must certainly avoid 13... $\mathbb{E}e8??$ 14. $d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d5\#$. However, it is worth checking both a) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ and b) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d4N$.

a) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

This has been the most common choice, although I only found six games in which it was played.

14. $d6\#$

The untested 14. $\mathbb{W}b3!?$ N may be White's best bet: 14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $h6$ The safest move. 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4\#$
14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $a4$ $h6$ 16. $a5$ $hxg5$ 17. $axb6$ $a6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19. $fxg5$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$



21. $\mathbb{Q}f4?$ $\mathbb{Q}b4!N$

Better than 21... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ as in Nguyen Chi Minh – Schabanel, Issy les Moulineaux 2002.

22. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $cxd4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4\#$

b) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$ N

An ambitious but risky move which I found.

14. $\mathbb{W}b3$

14. $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ looks dangerous, but after 14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ I think Black has enough resources to repel the attack: 15. $d6\#$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $h6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 18. $f5$ $hxg5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $gxh5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{W}h5$ 22. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$ $cxd4$ 25. $\mathbb{W}e5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7\#$

14... $f6$ 15. $d6\#$

15. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}b6\#$

15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6\#$

15... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ $\mathbb{W}xh8$

18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $f5$

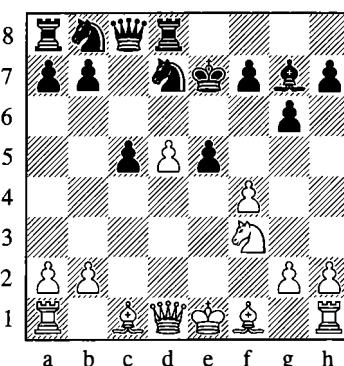
Black has excellent compensation.

19. $0-0-0$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$

Black has a second promising alternative in the form of:

12... $\mathbb{Q}d8!?$ N

The rook is going directly after the d5-pawn.



13. $fxe5$

13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $e4\#$

13. $d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 15. $0-0$ $e4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $h6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $f5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$

13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Black's 12th move was also suggested by Ziegler, who offers the following line:

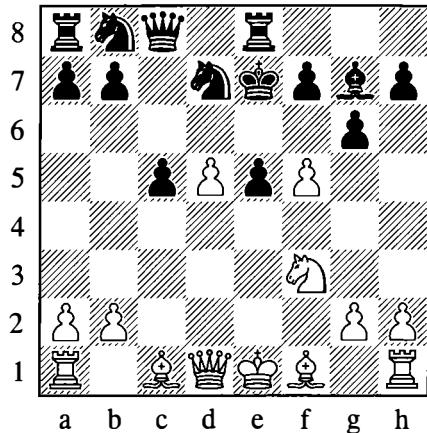
14. $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$ $f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}f5\#$

14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $0-0$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$

To summarize, it seems Black really is spoiled for choice at move 12. Let us now return to the main line of 12... $\mathbb{E}e8$ which, as we will soon see, is also promising for him.

From this position it is worth considering both **B1) 13.f5** and **B2) 13.fxe5**.

B1) 13.f5



This move has only been seen in a few games, but it is my engine's first choice. For instructive purposes it is worth analysing **B11) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ N**, but the strongest move for Black is **B12) 13...e4!**.

The following alternatives are less appealing:

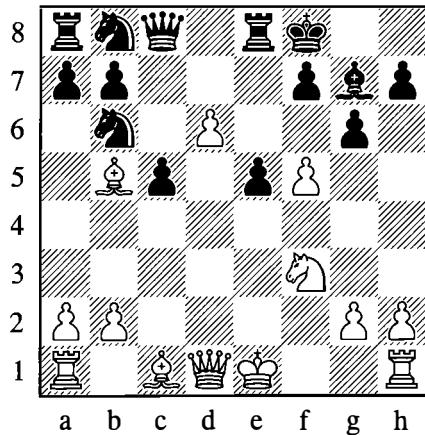
13... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$ 14.fxg6 hxg6 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$
Inkiov – Hamdouchi, Cap d'Agde 2010.

13...gxsf5 looks playable but risky: 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ f4 16. $\mathbb{Q}f5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8\bar{\bar}$

B11) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ N

Although this is not the move I recommend, I decided to include it mainly for its entertainment value.

14.d6\uparrow $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

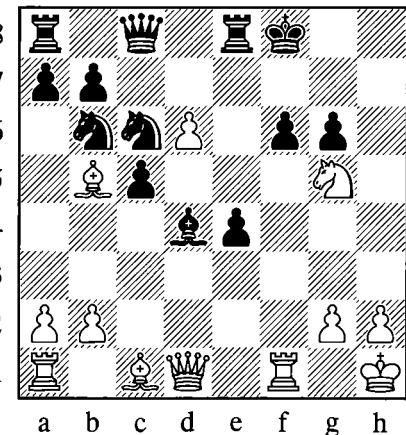


15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

15...e4 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{E}e5$ 17.f6 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{E}d5$
19. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\bar{\bar}$

**16.fxg6 hxg6 17.0–0 e4 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$
19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ f6**

Now White has to find some accurate moves:

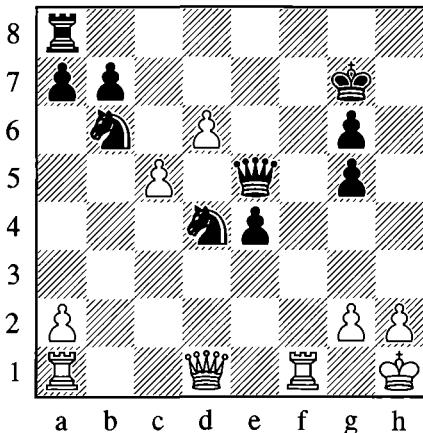


20. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

I have chosen this as the main line for instructive and aesthetic purposes, but it should be noted that 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc6\! \pm$ is the strongest move.

**21... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{W}xe8$ 23.b4! $\mathbb{W}e5$
24.bxc5 fxg5**

24... $\mathbb{E}h8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\bar{\bar}$

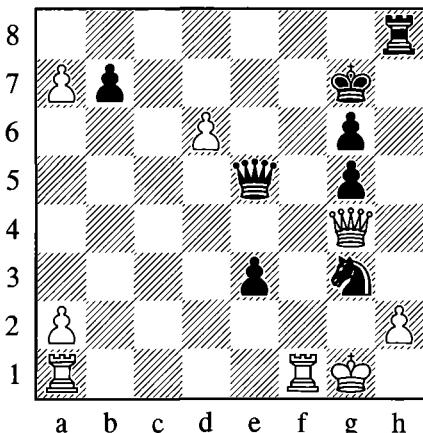


25.cxb6 ♜h8 26.g3

26.h3 ♜f3 27.♕xf3 exf3 28.♖c1 g4†

26...e3 27.♗g4 ♜f5 28.bxa7 ♜xg3† 29.♔g1!

29.♔g2 ♜xh2† 30.♔xh2 ♜xf1†+–



29...♜xh2! 30.♚f7†!

Both sides are exchanging powerful shots.

30.♔xh2? ♜xf1† 31.♗g2 ♜b2†+–

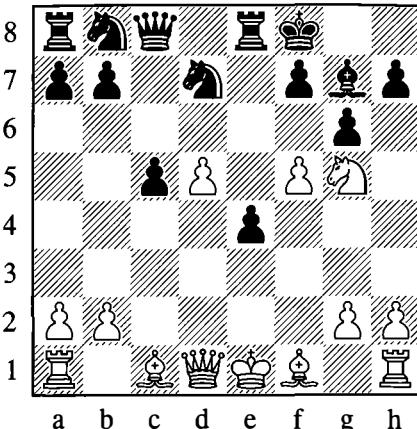
30...♜xf7 31.♗f3† ♜g7 32.♔xh2 ♜e2†
33.♗g2 ♜f4† 34.♗g3=

Such a sequence would surely win any Best Game Prize if it ever occurred over the board!

B12) 13...e4!

Let's return from fantasy land to concentrate on the stronger move.

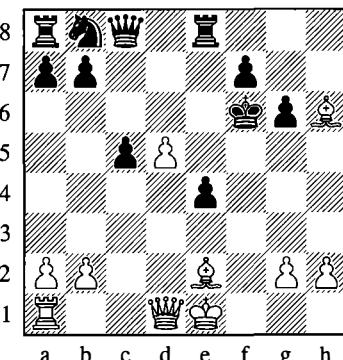
14.♘g5 ♜f8



15.♘xh7†?!

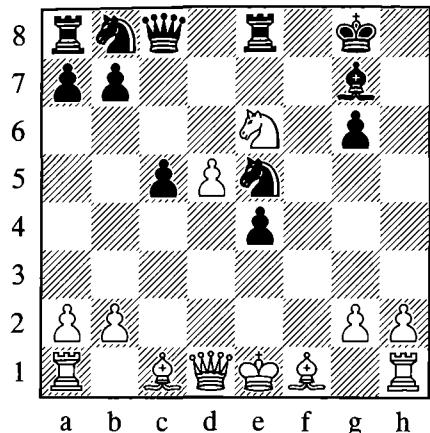
This is excessively greedy. White loses too much time for the sake of an insignificant pawn, while most of his pieces remain undeveloped.

15.fxg6 hxg6 16.♔e2 should be about equal, for instance: 16...♞d4 17.♗f1 ♜f6 18.♕xf6 ♜xf6 19.♗h7† ♜g7 20.♗xf6 ♜xf6 21.♗h6 This was Feller – Marzolo, Marseille 2009, and here Black should have played:



21...g5!N 22.♗b3 ♜g6 23.♕xg5 ♜xg5
24.♗g3†=

15...♗g8 16.fxg6 fxg6 17.♘g5 ♜e5 18.♘e6



White's knight has made a long journey, but just look at his other pieces. Now the punishment comes:

18... $\mathbb{Q}bc6!N$

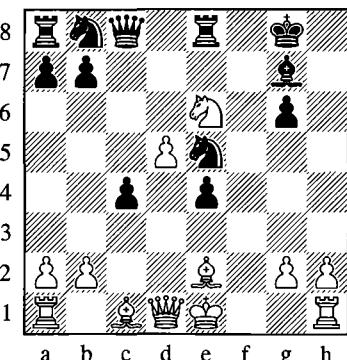
This beautiful move emphasizes development above all else!

It is worth comparing this move with the following practical example:

18...c4 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2?$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xg7N \mathbb{Q}xg7\#$ was correct.

Now in Szczesniak – Radecki, corr. 1992, Black could have used the same idea as in our main line, in an even more favourable setting:



19... $\mathbb{Q}bc6!N$

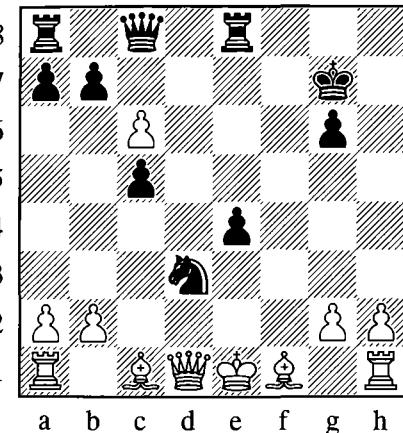
This should decide the game, for instance:

20. $\mathbb{Q}xg7 \mathbb{Q}xg7$ 21.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$
23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ c3#! 24. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}xc6-$ +

19. $\mathbb{Q}xg7 \mathbb{Q}xg7$

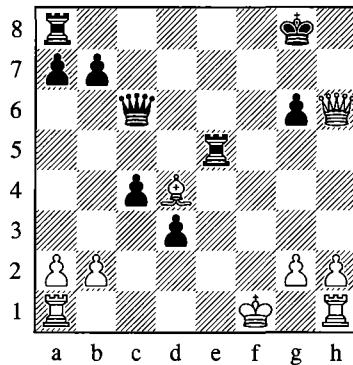
Now we reach a comical situation where all of White's pieces are on their starting positions!

20.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$



21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

No better is: 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd3?$ exd3# 22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ c4!
23. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xc6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$
26. $\mathbb{Q}d4$



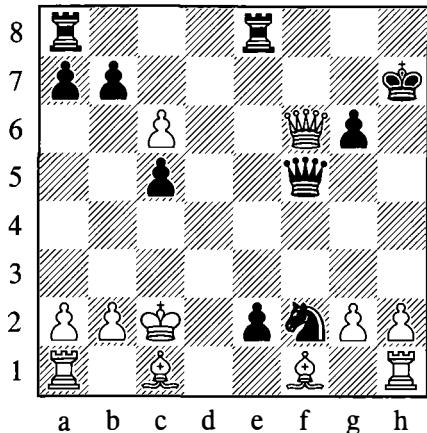
26... $\mathbb{W}d6!$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}f8\#$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xf8\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf8+$
29. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}e7-$ +

21... $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 22. $\mathbb{W}b3$ e3# 23. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ e2 24. $\mathbb{W}c3\#$
 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}f6!$

Only this move can save White.

25... $\mathbb{W}f5\#$

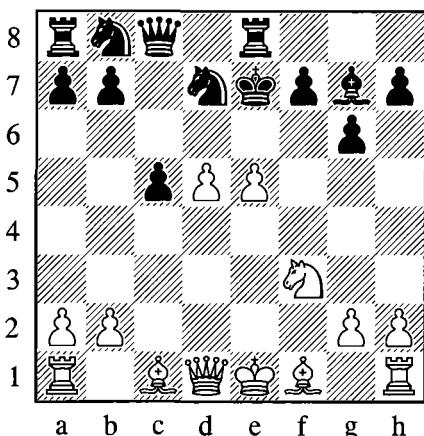
25... $\mathbb{Q}xh1=$



26. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ $gxf5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $bxc6$ 28. $\mathbb{E}g1$ $exf1=\mathbb{W}$
29. $\mathbb{E}axf1$ $\mathbb{E}e2\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{E}d8\#$

White is still not altogether out of trouble.

B2) 13. $fxe5$



This is the more popular move.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 15. 0-0

15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ leads to the same thing.

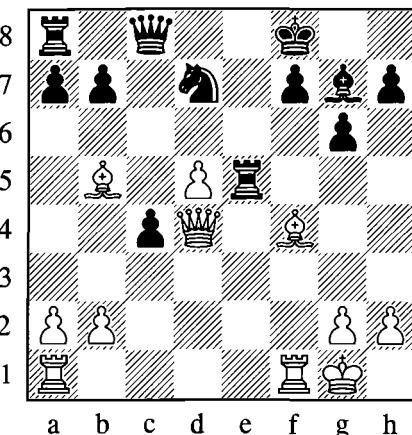
15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ c4

This is the main move, although 17... $\mathbb{E}e4$ is also possible: 18. $\mathbb{W}f3$ f5 19. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{E}xe1$ (19... $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$) 20. $\mathbb{E}xe1$ a6 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$ Saint Amour – Hase, Internet 2004.

18. $\mathbb{W}d4$

18. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#?$! $\mathbb{W}c5\#$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g4$ f5 21. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{E}xd7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xh7$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 23. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ (23. $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$) 23... $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xd7\#$ $\mathbb{E}xd7\#$ Yuferov – Kapengut, Soviet Union 1976.

The text move leads to an endgame.



18... $\mathbb{E}f5$

This is my preferred square for the rook.

19. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 21. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

It is important to challenge the strong bishop, even though Black's kingside structure now gets destroyed.

22. $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xf5$ $gxf5$ 24. g3 $\mathbb{E}g8$
25. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{E}g6=$

Kirсанов – Smirnov, corr. 2002.

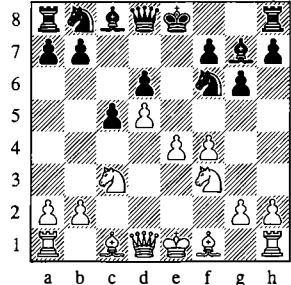
Conclusion

The Mikenas Attack is not too dangerous, and Black has the luxury of more than one good reply. Players wishing to avoid heavy theory can play 8...dxe5 which leads to a balanced endgame. Those who desire a full-blooded fight will get their wish after 8... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$, and I would encourage the reader to investigate the alternatives analysed at move 12, as they may well be as strong or stronger than the main line.

Chapter 2

f4 Systems

The Four Pawns Attack



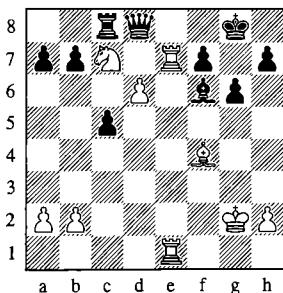
Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

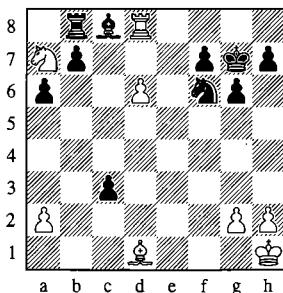
8...0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

A) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$	19
B) 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$	22
C) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$	23
C1) 13... $\mathbb{Q}a5$	27
C2) 13...c4 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$	29
C21) 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$	29
C22) 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$	30

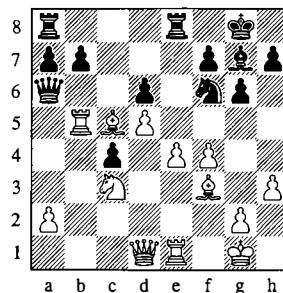
A) note to 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



A) note to 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$



C21) after 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$



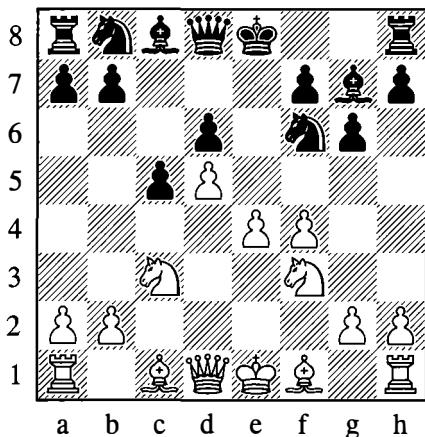
25... $\mathbb{Q}xe7!$ N

28... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ N

19... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f4 ♜g7 8.♘f3

The main theoretical line is 8.♗b5†, which can be found in Chapters 3–6. The knight move is an important alternative, and we will deal with it thoroughly over the coming pages.



8...0–0 9.♗e2

A harmless alternative is:

9.♗d3

The bishop is more vulnerable on this square, and Black has many good options.

9...♝e8

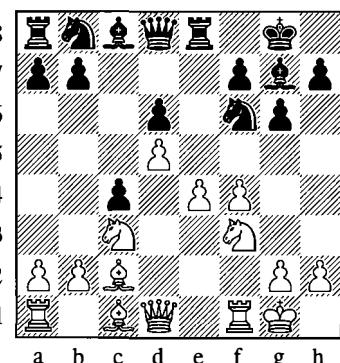
A decent alternative is: 9...b5?! 10.♗xb5 ♜xe4 11.♗xe4 ♜a5† 12.♗f2 ♜xb5

13.♗xd6 ♜b6 14.♗c4 ♜a6 15.♗e2 ♜b7

16.♗d1 ♜d7≈ 17.♗ce5 ♜xe2† 18.♗xe2=

Parr – Prods, Melbourne 1972.

10.0–0 c4 11.♗c2



11...b5

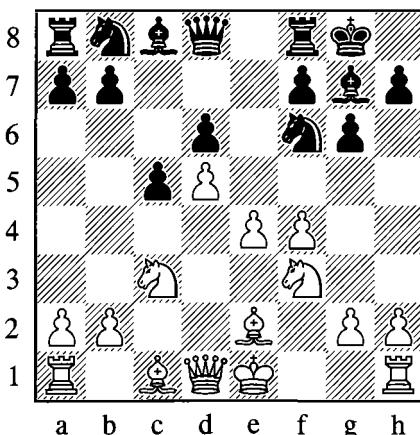
11...♗a6!≈ is a suggestion from Nikos Ntirlis.

12.a3 ♜b6†

12...♗bd7 13.♗e3 a6 14.♗d4 ♜b7 15.♗el ♜c7= Felmery – Sallai, Hungary 2010.

13.♗h1 ♜bd7 14.h3 ♜b7 15.♗e1 ♜c5 16.♗e3 ♜ad8

With equal chances in Kolba – Ivanenko, Lugansk 2010.



This is the main tabiya of the Four Pawns Attack. The position often arises from the King's Indian Defence, and there are many players who are happy to use one line to meet two openings.

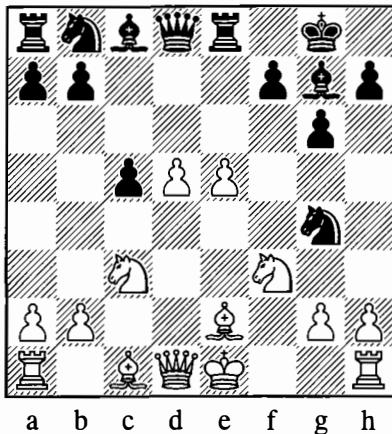
Here Black has several playable choices, and I decided to cover three of them: A) 9...♝e8, B) 9...♗bd7 and C) 9...♗g4. The last of them is my personal preference, although the choice is at least partially a matter of taste, and when preparing for an important game it may be useful to have more than one option available.

A) 9...♝e8

Although it is not my favourite, this move has actually been the most popular choice, and to cover it extensively would almost require a separate book. Instead I will provide a concise summary of the most important lines.

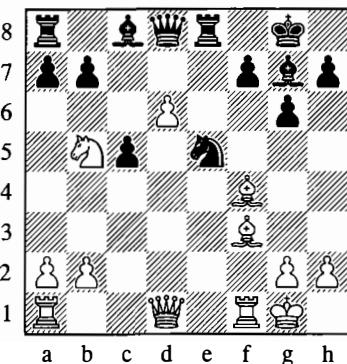
10.e5

10.♕d2 ♜bd7 11.0–0 leads to variation B21 of Chapter 7 – see page 87.

10...dxe5 11.fxe5 ♜g4**12.♗g5**

Worse is:

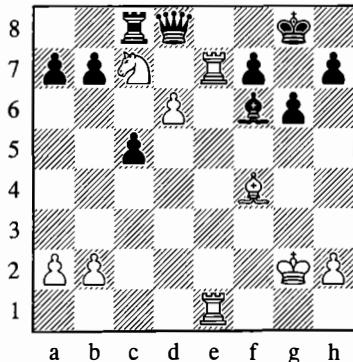
12.0–0?! ♜xe5 13.♗f4 ♜bd7 14.d6 ♜xf3†
15.♗xf3 ♜e5 16.♗b5

**16...♗d7?!**

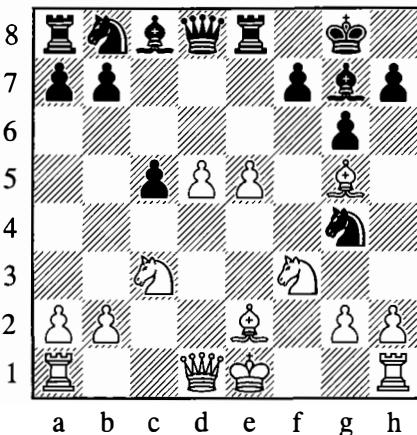
16...♗f8 is simple and good: 17.♗c7 ♗b8
18.♗e1 ♜xf3† 19.♗xf3† Gerard – Pepino,
Turin 2002.

17.♗c7 ♜xf3† 18.♗xf3 ♗c6 19.♗g3 ♗e2
20.♗ae1 ♗d4† 21.♗h1 ♗xg2 22.♗xg2 ♗xg2†
23.♗xg2 ♗c8 24.♗e7 ♗f6 25.♗fe1

In De Lagontrie – Bert, corr. 1998, Black could have kept the advantage as follows:



25...♗xe7!N 26.dxe7 ♗d7 27.e8=♗† ♗xe8
28.♗xe8 ♗g4† 29.♗g3 ♗b4 30.♗e2 ♗c4†

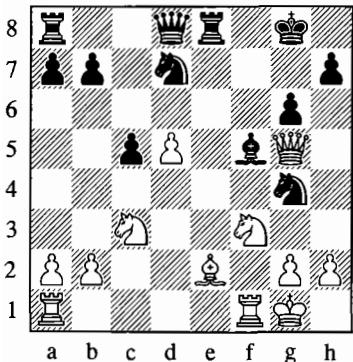
**12...♗b6**

If you want to avoid long forced variations, you can try:

12...f6?! 13.exf6 ♗xf6 14.♗d2 ♗f5

14...♗xg5?! 15.♗xg5 ♗b6→

15.0–0 ♗xg5 16.♗xg5 ♗d7=

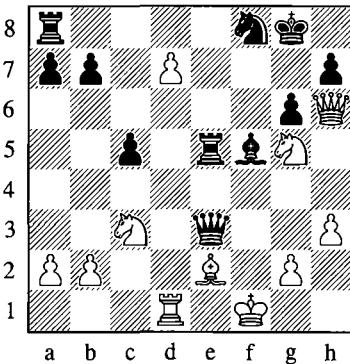


17.h3 ♜e3 18.♗h6?!

18.♗f2 ♜xg5 19.♘xg5=

18...♘xf1 19.♘g5 ♜e7 20.d6 ♜e3† 21.♘xf1 ♜f8 22.♗d1 ♜e5 23.d7

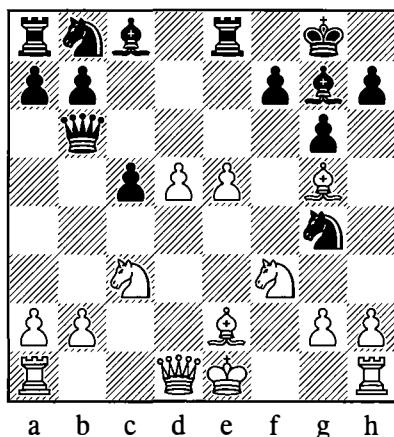
This occurred in Szabo – Timman, Amsterdam 1975, and now Black could have played:



23...♗f4†! 24.♔g1 ♘d8

Black is winning, for example:

25.♘d5 ♘xd5 26.♗xd5 ♜e3† 27.♘f1 ♜e4
28.♗f3 ♘d3†+–



13.0–0 ♜xe5 14.♘xe5

The alternative is:

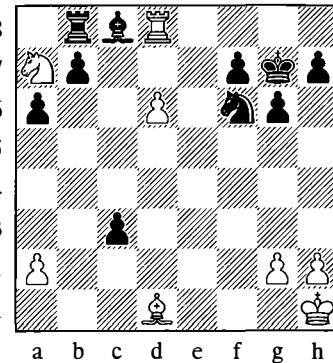
14.d6

And here everything is almost forced:

14...♗xb2 15.♘d5 ♜xf3† 16.♗xf3 ♜d4†
17.♗h1 ♜xa1 18.♗xa1 ♜xal 19.♗xal ♜d7
20.♗e7 ♜b8 21.♘c7 ♜f8 22.♗e1 c4 23.♗xf8

♗xf8 24.♗e8† ♜g7 25.♘b5 ♜f6 26.♗d8 a6
27.♘a7 c3 28.♗d1

Now in Murin – Pertlova, Tatranske Zruby 2009, Black could have improved with:



28...♘e4!N

28...♗g4N leads only to an equal position.

29.♗c2?

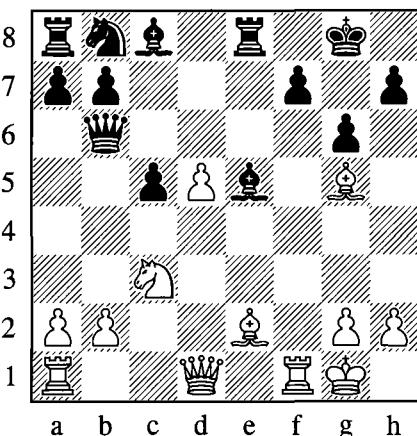
This allows a neat refutation.

29.♗xc8 ♜xd6 30.♗xd6 ♜xc8 31.♗c2 ♜e8
32.♗d1 ♜e2 33.♗c1 b5†

29...♘xd6! 30.♗xd6 ♜f5+–

The c-pawn will decide the game.

14...♗xe5

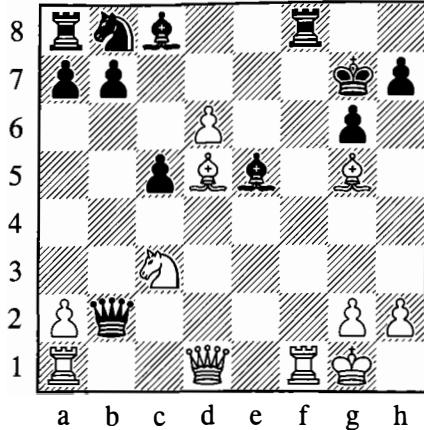


15.♗c4?

This has almost always been played, but it is a mistake. Maybe White should try 15.♗d2, although after 15...♗f5 Black is

at least level, and perhaps already a little better.

15... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 16.d6 $\mathbb{E}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$

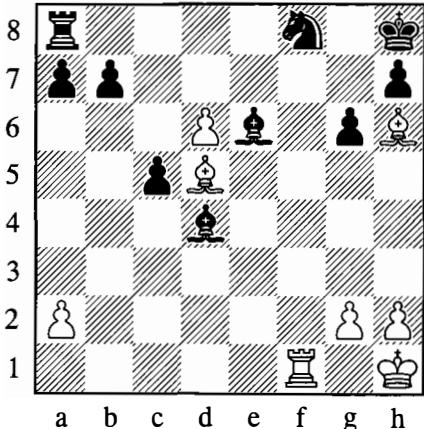


18... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$

18... $\mathbb{W}xc3$ was good enough for equality in Kahn – Zimmerman, Budapest 1996, but Black can play for more.

19. $\mathbb{E}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$
22. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 23. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$

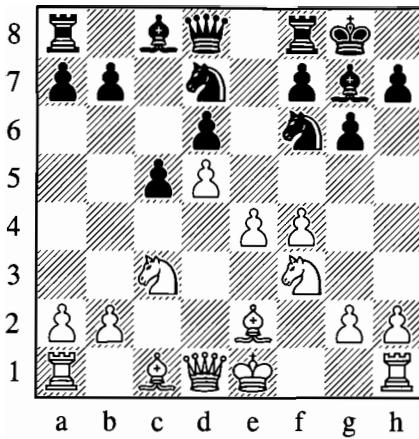
Black is clearly better, for example:



25. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xf8\#$ $\mathbb{E}xf8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$
28. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$

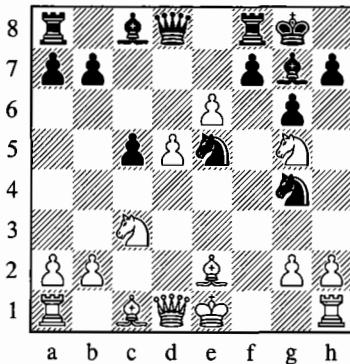
Verdier – Niessen, e-mail 1999.

B) 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$



10.0–0

10.e5?! is risky for White, for instance:
10...dxe5 (10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$! is also playable) 11.fxe5
 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 12.e6 $\mathbb{Q}de5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$??



13...fxe6! 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ exd5
16. $\mathbb{W}h4$ h6 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g5#

10... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$

This is the independent line. Instead 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ takes us to variation B21 of Chapter 7 on page 87.

11... $\mathbb{W}e7$! 12. $\mathbb{E}e1$

12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ is well met by 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$! threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$.

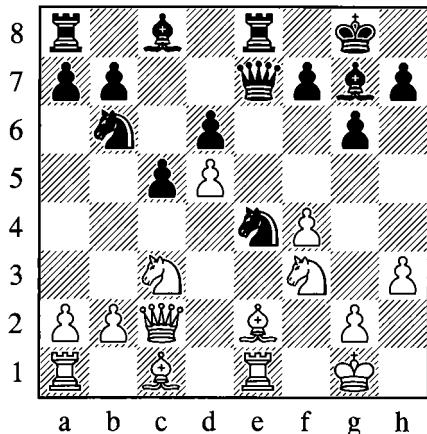
12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$!

Intending to put the bishop on g4 and take on f3 when the time is right. Later Black can develop his queenside counterplay, perhaps rerouting the b6-knight to another post if necessary.

13.h3

Preventing the aforementioned plan, but allowing a second idea:

13...♝xe4!



14.♝d3?!

14.♝b5 ♜xc3 (14...♝f5?! also seems to work)
15.bxc3 ♜d7 leads to unclear play.

14...♝f5! 15.♝xe4 c4!

Black emerges with the better chances. My thanks to Nikos Ntirlis for showing me this variation.

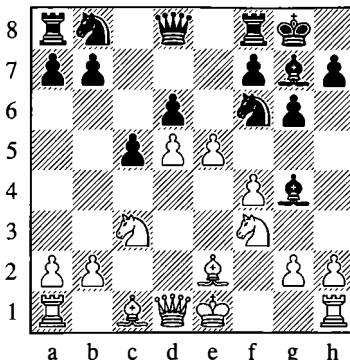
C) 9...♝g4

Overall this is my preferred choice. Black intends to exchange the bishop and complete development while restraining the e4-e5 break.

10.0–0

10.e5

This move is not dangerous, but of course we should still check it.



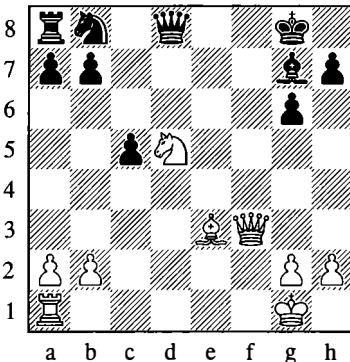
10...♞xf3

A reasonable alternative is 10...dxe5 11.fxe5 ♜fd7 12.e6 fxe6 13.0–0 and now instead of 13...♞xf3 transposing to the main continuation, Black can consider 13...♝a6! with interesting play.

11.♝xf3 dxe5 12.fxe5 ♜fd7 13.e6 ♜e5 14.0–0 fxe6 15.♝e3 ♜xf3†

The safest move. The knight concludes its dance.

16.♝xf3 ♜xf3 17.♛xf3 exd5 18.♝xd5



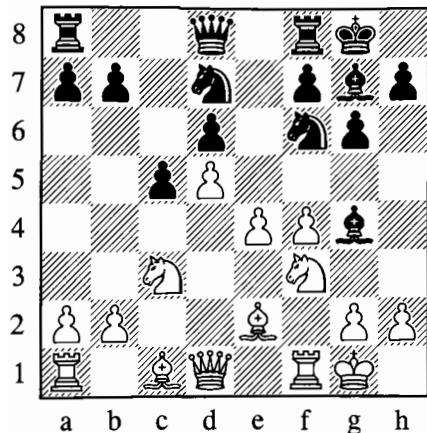
18...♝d7

Or 18...♝c6 19.♝xc5 ♜h8 20.♝d1 ♛a5 21.♝a3?! ♜e8† Matisson – Thimognier, e-mail 2003.

19.♝d1 ♜e5 20.♛e4 ♛d6 21.♝c3 ♛c6 22.♛xc6 ♜xc6 23.♛xc5 b6=

Monin – M. Nepomniashchy, St Petersburg 1997.

10...♝bd7

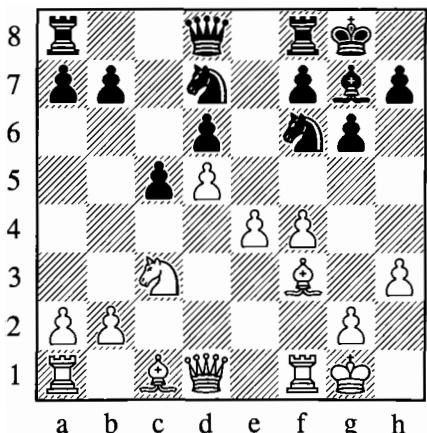


11.h3

11... $\mathbb{E}e1$ should be met by 11... $\mathbb{E}e8$ when it is doubtful that White has anything better than 12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ transposing to the main line.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

From here Black has a wide choice of possible plans. He can prepare ...b5 either with or without ...a6; alternatively he might look to improve his position on the queenside with ...c4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$. The queen's rook may go to either b8 or c8, depending on Black's other queenside plans. Finally the king's knight on f6 might drop back to d7, or switch to the queenside via e8 and c7. As for White, it will be hard to get in the e4-e5 break, so he often resorts to advancing his g-pawn in a bid to gain space on the kingside.



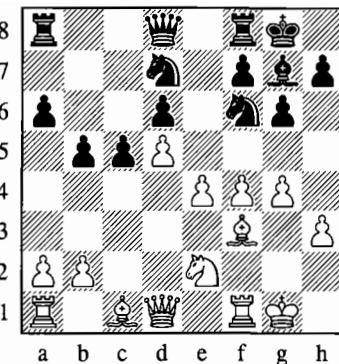
12... $\mathbb{E}e8$

I will take this as the main line. Another interpretation of the position is:

12...a6

After this move White can either ignore the queenside counterplay with a) 13.g4 or restrain it with b) 13.a4.

a) 13.g4 b5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

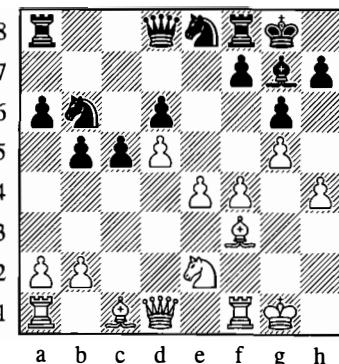
Another possibility is 14... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16.g5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 17. $\mathbb{E}b1$ c4= and Black has a good position.

15.g5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$

15... $\mathbb{Q}fd7=$

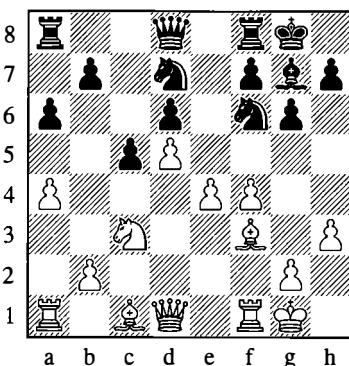
16.h4

This occurred in Jobava – Kotronias, Rijeka 2010. Here I suggest:



16...f6N 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ fxg5 18.hxg5 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}e2=$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2!$? 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{E}xf4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8\bar{x}$

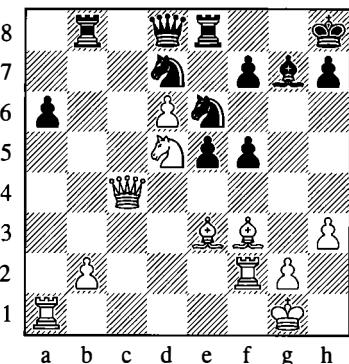
b) 13.a4



13... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

With this move Black restrains the e4-e5 break while preparing to deploy the knight on c7. From there it will support the ...b5 plan, and if White prevents it with a4-a5 then the knight might go to b5 and later d4. 13... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ transposes to 13.a4 in the notes to the main line – see 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13.a4 a6.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b8$? is also interesting, as shown by the following example: 14.a5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b5 17.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ (17... $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ N 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ may be a little more precise.) 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 20.e5 dxe5 21.f5 c4 22. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ gxf5 23.d6 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$



25. $\mathbb{Q}e7$?! e4 26. $\mathbb{Q}h5$ f4 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$? $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}b6\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}xd6+$ Adly – Grischuk, Ningbo 2011.

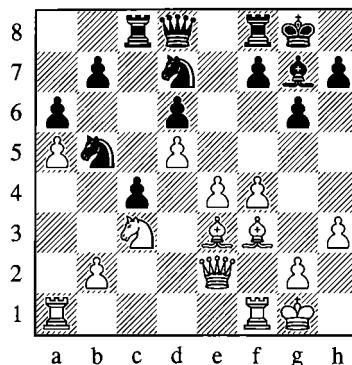
14. $\mathbb{W}d3$

14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (15.a5 $\mathbb{Q}b5=$) 15...b5N Strangely this has not been played yet. 16.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}xb5=$

The text move is fighting against ...b5, but invites Black's counterplay with ...c4.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ 15.a5 c4 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$

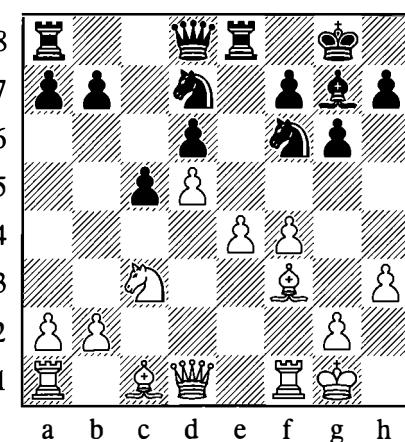
Black succeeds in exchanging another piece, which gives him more breathing space.



18. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ axb5 19.a6 bxa6 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$

21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 22.e5 dxe5 23.fxe5 $\mathbb{W}c8=$

V. Georgiev – Chatalbashev, Struga 2011.

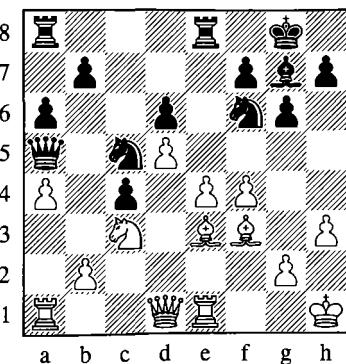


13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

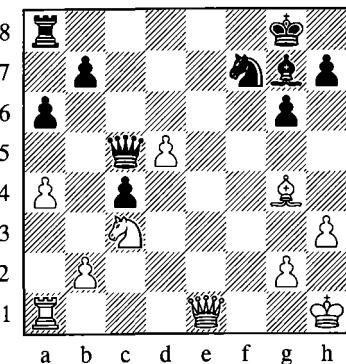
Supporting a future e4-e5 is certainly logical. White has tried several other moves, and I have summarized a few of the key examples below.

13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b5 14.e5?! dxe5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b3$ exf4 was a clear failure for White in Lahiri – Dochev, Paracin 2010.

13.a4 a6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ c4 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=$

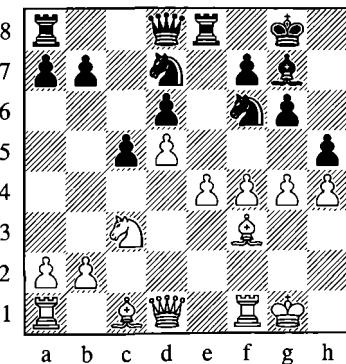


17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 18.e5 dxe5 19.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20.e6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21.exf7† $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{E}xe1†$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe1$



Now 23... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ was Zaja – Marholev, Cutro 2005, but instead 23... $\mathbb{Q}e5!N$ would have given Black the better chances.

The most popular alternative has been immediate kingside expansion, but Black is well placed to meet that plan:
13.g4 h6 14.h4 h5!

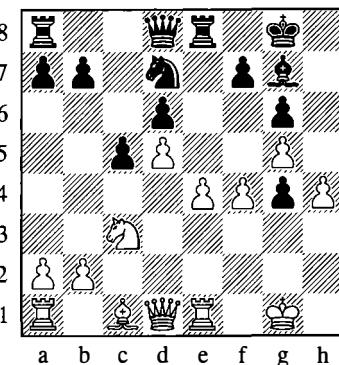


15.g5

The justification for Black's last move is seen after: 15.gxh5?! $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{W}xh4!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g2N$ (17. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{W}xh5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{E}ad8+$ Otano – Otero, Cuba 1997.) 17...gxh5 18. $\mathbb{E}h1$ $\mathbb{W}g4†$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ hxg4† 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$

16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ occurred in Jobava – A. Tate, Porto Carras 2011, and here 16...c4!N would have given Black equal play. In the game he preferred 16...b5?!, after which White could have claimed some advantage with 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb5N$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 18. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xc1$ ±.

16...hxg4 17. $\mathbb{E}el$



17... $\mathbb{W}a5!$

17...c4 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 19.bxc3 $\mathbb{E}xe4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5=$ Kouatly – Kindermann, Trnava 1987.

18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c4 19. $\mathbb{Q}g2N$

19. $\mathbb{E}b1$ b5 was also pleasant for Black in Merilo – Alvarez Rouchaud, corr. 1996.

19... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20.f5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ b5 22.fxg6 fxg6†

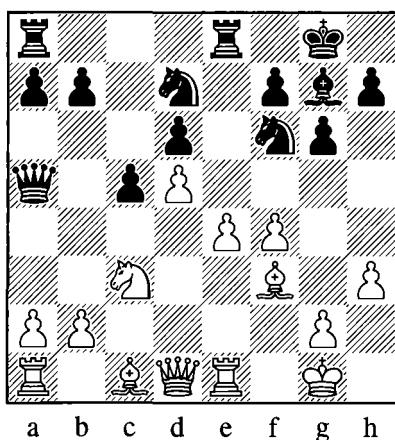
After the text move Black should aim to advance his queenside play by preparing ...b5 and/or ...c4. We will investigate two main continuations: C1) 13... $\mathbb{W}a5$ and C2) 13...c4.

I will also mention a playable sideline in 13... $\mathbb{E}c8?$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b5 which might lead to an equal endgame as in the following example:

15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{E}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{E}xe3$

18. $\mathbb{E}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}xd5=$ Nogueiras
 Santiago – Kasparov, Barcelona 1989.

C1) 13... $\mathbb{W}a5$



This has been the most popular choice.

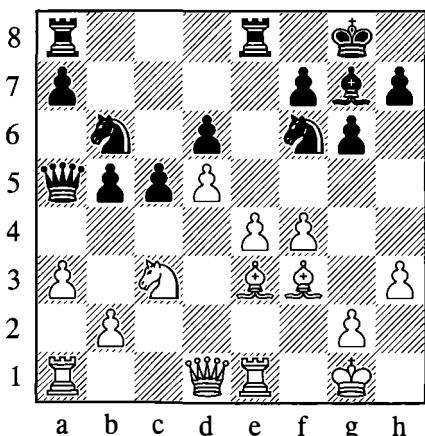
14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

14. $a4$ $a6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ can be met by 15... $c4$ which resembles line C2, or even 15... $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ with good play as in J. Brown – Nenciulescu, e-mail 2002.

14... $b5$

14... $c4$ takes us to variation C2 on page 29.

15. $a3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$

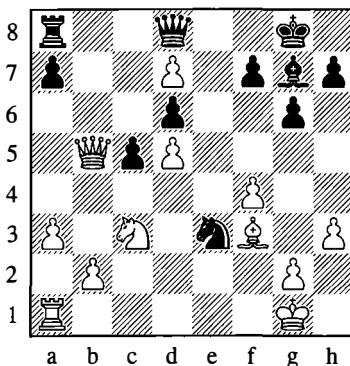


16. $e5$

If White does not take the chance to play this move then he may not get another, for instance: 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2!?$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $a4$ $b4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$ $a6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $axb5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 22. $axb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2\#$ Cebalo – Bojkov, Cetinje 2009.

16... $\mathbb{Q}c4$

16... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ is also good, although it gives White a wider choice of deviations. We will follow one relevant example. 17. $e6$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 18. $exd7$ $\mathbb{E}xe3$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xb5=$ It is worth quoting the remaining moves of a well-played game from this position.



21... $\mathbb{E}b8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 23. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{E}b6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ (24. $\mathbb{W}c8$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 25. $\mathbb{W}c6=$) 24... $\mathbb{E}xc6$ 25. $dxc6$ $a6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e8$ $\mathbb{W}b2$ 28. $\mathbb{E}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 29. $d8=\mathbb{W}$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 33. $h4$ $\mathbb{W}f2$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}g1$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Banikas – Kotronias, Korinthos 1998.

17. $exf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$

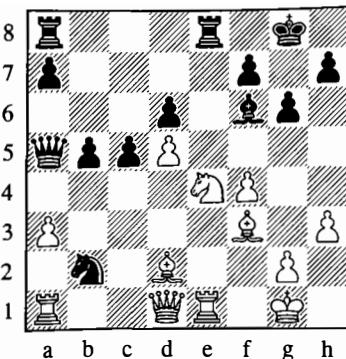
The following sacrificial alternative is tricky, but ultimately unsound:

17... $\mathbb{Q}xf6!?$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2!N$

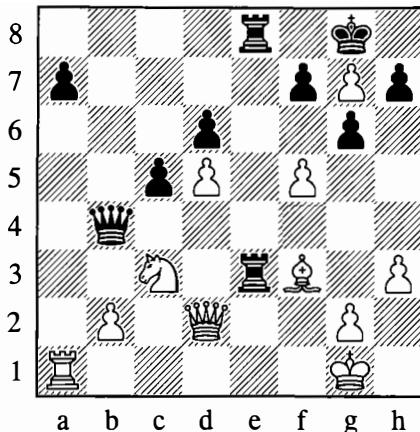
18. $\mathbb{Q}c1?$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 19. $bxcc3$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{E}xe8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}xa1+$ Komljenovic – Delchev, Creon 2001.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$

19. $\mathbb{W}c2? \mathbb{Q}c4\#$



19... $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}c2$ c4 22. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$
 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$

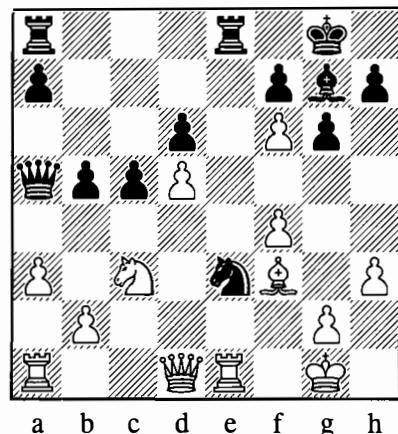


22... $\mathbb{W}f4!$

22... $\mathbb{W}h4$ has been more popular, but I don't like it. 23. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{H}xg6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{E}e5$ 26.f4 $\mathbb{W}g3\#$ 27. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{W}f4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}e3\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{E}g5$ 30. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3\#$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f6\pm$ Mercadal Benejam – Khlusevich, corr. 2000.

23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

23... $\mathbb{W}xf5??$ is refuted by 24. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f3$.



18. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8$

Black should be fine from here; his rooks are excellent and White's two minor pieces are unable to cause much harm.

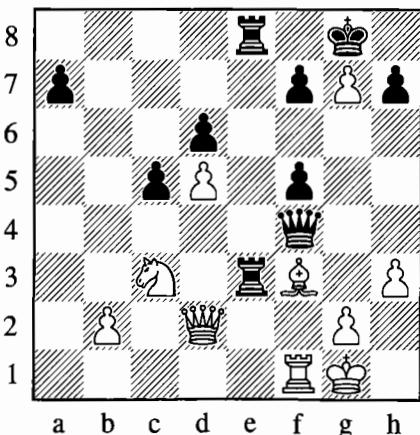
20.b5!

If White plays too slowly then he could become worse, so he needs to open the kingside.

20...b4

20... $\mathbb{Q}xf5??$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d2$ b4 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c4 23. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ c3
24. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3=$ Mercadal Benejam – Hervet, e-mail 2001.

21.axb4 $\mathbb{W}xb4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d2$



24. $\mathbb{Q}e4!N$

This is the right way for White to maintain the balance. Instead 24. $\mathbb{Q}g4?$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ 25. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ led to an ending with good winning chances for Black in Rain – Mesquita, e-mail 2005.

24... $\mathbb{W}h6$

24... $\mathbb{W}g3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{E}e1=$

25. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{E}xh3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xh6\#$
 $\mathbb{Q}xh6=$

This sharp line seems perfectly playable, although players who are not keen on memorizing so many forced moves may prefer the following alternative.

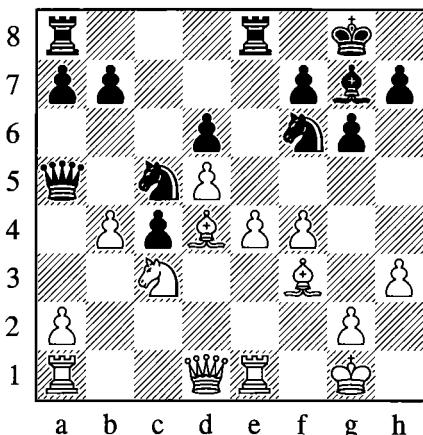
C2) 13...c4

With this thematic move Black sets his queenside counterplay in motion. This should provide roughly even chances without as many long forced lines as we saw in the previous variation.

14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$

The two main options now are C21) 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ and C22) 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$.

C21) 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16.b4



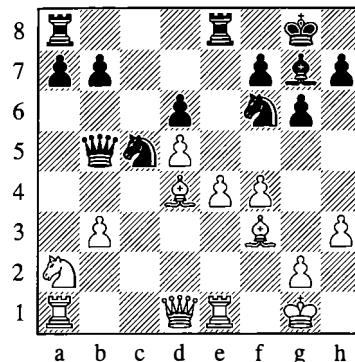
Such a move could be easy to overlook! Fortunately for us, Black is adequately placed to meet it.

16... $\mathbb{W}xb4$

Less convincing is:

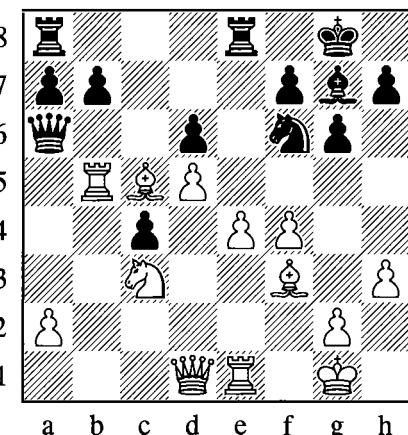
16...cx b3?! 17.ax b3 $\mathbb{W}b4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{W}b5$
18... $\mathbb{W}a3$ 19.e5 dxe5 20.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 21.b4

$\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ b6 23. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 25.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 27.b5 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$
Netolitzky – Knostenbergs, e-mail 2006.



19. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ $\mathbb{W}xb3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}axd1$ $dxc5$
22.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d7?$
22...a6? 23.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$
23. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}ed8$ 24.e6 $\mathbb{Q}f6?$ 25.e7 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6 27. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$
Bergonzoni – B. Benko, Internet 2004.

17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

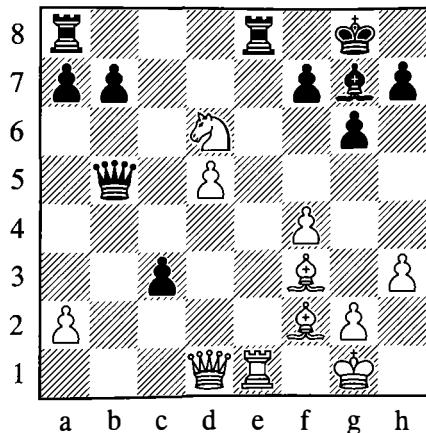


19... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$

An important tactical finesse, which disrupts White's coordination.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ c3 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd6?$

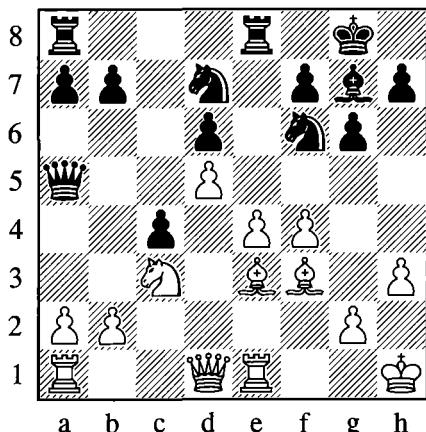
22. $\mathbb{W}c2=$



22... $\mathbb{E}xe1\#$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe1$ $\mathbb{W}b2$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$
25. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ c2+–

Cruz Lopez Claret – Vachier Lagrave, San Sebastian 2011.

C22) 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$



15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}xc5$

This exchange of bishop for knight represents a definite achievement for Black, but the knight was headed for d3 so White hardly had a choice. Now to avoid becoming worse he must play:

17.e5 dxe5 18.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19.e6

19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 20.e6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ fxe6
22.dxe6? $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ Zantork – Timoschenko, Martin 2003.

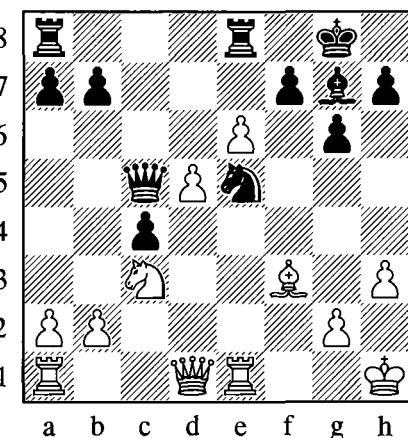
19... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Equally playable is:

19...fxe6 20. $\mathbb{E}xe6$
20.dxe6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xc5?$
(22. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 24. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$
25. $\mathbb{E}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 26. $\mathbb{E}b8$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xc8$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$
28. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 29. $\mathbb{E}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 30. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $\mathbb{E}xe6$
31. $\mathbb{E}c7\#$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 32. $\mathbb{E}xe7\#$ ($\mathbb{Q}xe7=$) 22... $\mathbb{E}xc5$
23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}c6\#$ Aschenbrenner – Postl, Graz 2002.

20... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{E}ad8=$

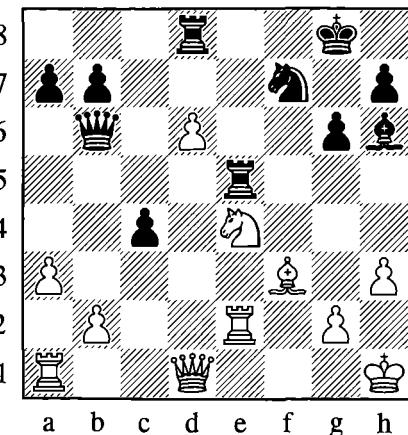
Lautier – Temirbaev, Elista 1998.



20.exf7#

20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f5 22. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
23. $\mathbb{E}e2=$ Umansky – B. Benko, Internet 2003.

20... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 22.d6 $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}e2$
 $\mathbb{E}e5$ 24.a3 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 25. $\mathbb{E}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 26. $\mathbb{E}e2$



26...♝g7

Settling for a repetition of moves. If Black was determined to play on then he could consider 26...♝f8!?N when his position is not worse, but neither is White's.

27.♝d2 ♞h6

½–½

Cebalo – Timoschenko, Lido Estensi 2003.

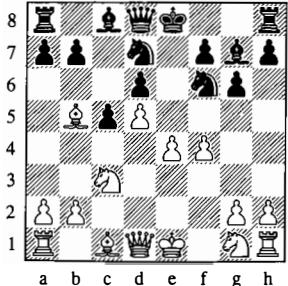
Conclusion

Although the Four Pawns Attack looks and sounds dangerous, White is unable to generate much of an attack. Black can develop his pieces and castle in relative ease, and has a wide choice of playable plans in the middlegame. My personal preference is the 9...♝g4 line followed later by 13...c4 as we saw in variation C2, but the reader is invited to examine the different options and make his own choice.

Chapter 3

f4 Systems

Flick-Knife Attack – 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$



Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$

8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9.e5 dxе5 10.fxе5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 11.e6 $\mathbb{W}h4\#$

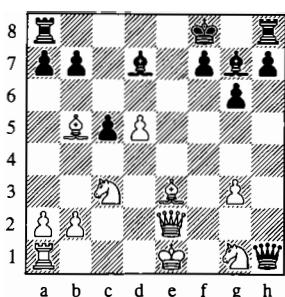
A) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

33

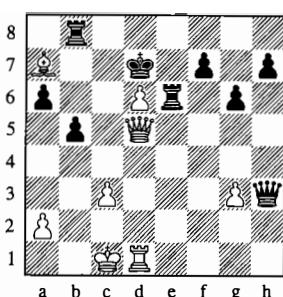
B) 12.g3!

35

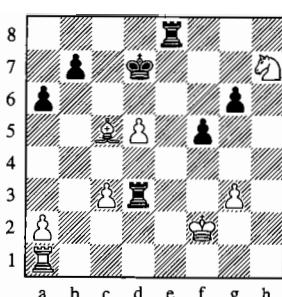
B) note to 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



B) note to 18. $\mathbb{W}g4\#$



B) note to 22... $\mathbb{E}c8$

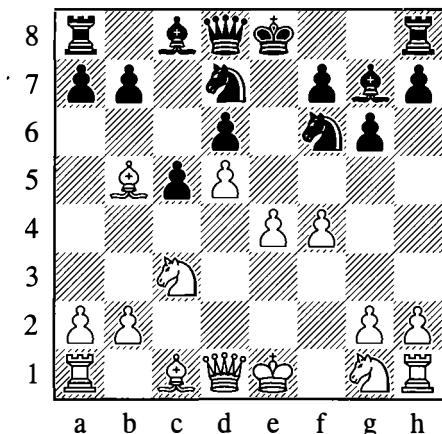


16... $\mathbb{E}e8!$

24... $\mathbb{W}xg3?N$

26... $\mathbb{E}d2\#N$

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5
6.e4 g6 7.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$



This move is generally thought to be suspicious, and rightly I think. Since I am not recommending it, I will just show you what I consider the most important and critical lines.

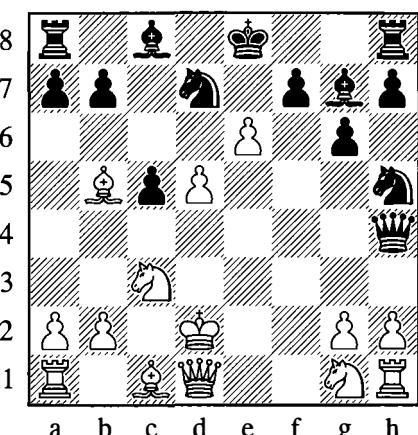
9.e5 dxe5 10.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 11.e6

11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ a6 is about equal.

11... $\mathbb{W}h4\#$

Now the two options are A) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ and B)
12.g3!.

A) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



This move allows White to claim an extra piece, but Black gets plenty of attacking chances.

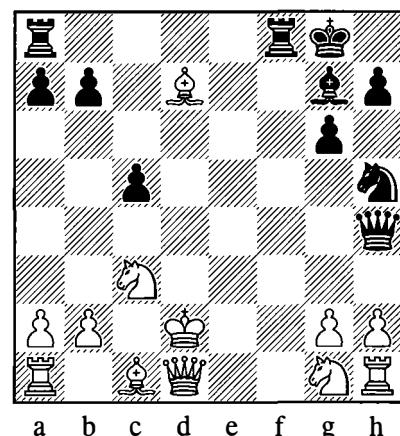
12...fxe6 13.dxe6

13. $\mathbb{Q}f3?$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 14.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}f2\#$ is poor for White.

13...0–0 14.exd7 $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$

15. $\mathbb{Q}f3?$ $\mathbb{W}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ is refuted by 16... $\mathbb{W}xg2\#$! 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 20.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ c4# 22. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{W}e3\#$ and Black wins.

The last few moves have been virtually forced on both sides, but now Black has a choice.



15... $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$

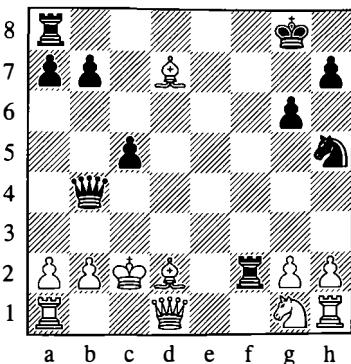
An interesting alternative is:

15... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$? 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$
16.bxc3? $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$
16... $\mathbb{W}b4\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2\#$!

This is a risky attempt to preserve White's material advantage.

18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ is safer, and should lead to equality as demonstrated in the following example:
18... $\mathbb{W}e4\#$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
21. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}he1$
(23. $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$? $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}he1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$
 $\mathbb{Q}xd2\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$) 23... $\mathbb{Q}xd2\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$

$\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8=$ Van Vugt – B. Benko, e-mail 2006. (25... $\mathbb{Q}e4N$ also leads to equality after: 26. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5=$)



18... $\mathbb{W}c4\#$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}d3\#$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}f1\#?$

Black can repeat the position with 20... $\mathbb{W}f1\#$ but it is tempting to play for more.

21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{W}xd7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}c4\#$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$

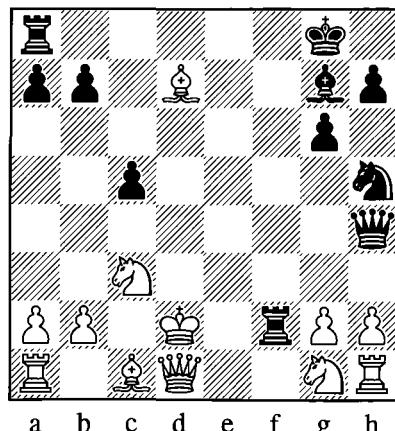
Black remains a piece down, but White's forces are badly restricted.

24. $a4$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 25. $\mathbb{E}a3$ $\mathbb{E}e1$ 26. $\mathbb{E}f3\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xf1$ $\mathbb{E}xf1$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}xc1\#?$

28... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ is possible of course.

29. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\#$

The knight is trapped, but Black's king can support his extra pawn. Black has some winning chances.



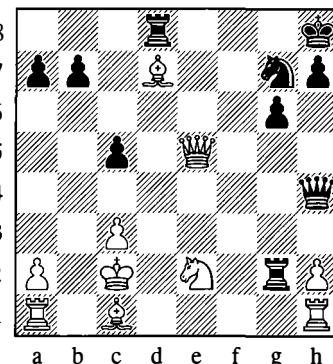
16. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b3\#$ $c4$

Once again Black has a choice of playable lines. The alternative is:

17... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e6$ $\mathbb{E}xg2\#?$ N

This was my attempt to improve on 18... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 19. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 20. $gxh4$ as occurred in Iotov – Simeonov, Bankia 2003. Here Black's best way of maintaining compensation would have been 20... $\mathbb{E}xd7\#N$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{E}f3$, although it seems to me that White's chances should be higher.

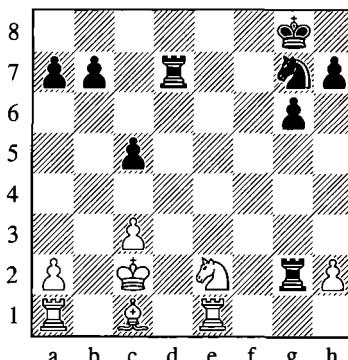
19. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 20. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e5$



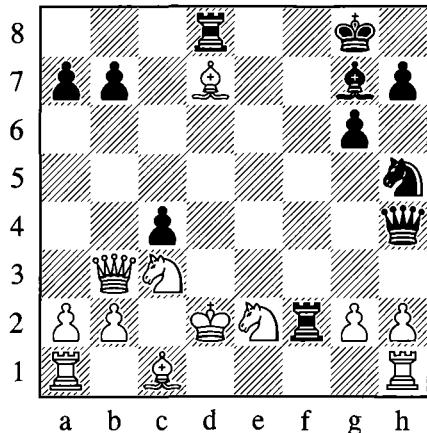
21... $\mathbb{W}c4\#$

21... $\mathbb{E}xd7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ (22. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{W}c4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xg7\#$ $\mathbb{E}xg7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}hel$ $h6\#$) 22... $c4\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$

22. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}xd7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}b8\#$ $\mathbb{W}g8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xg8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xg8$
Black has reasonable chances in the endgame, for instance:



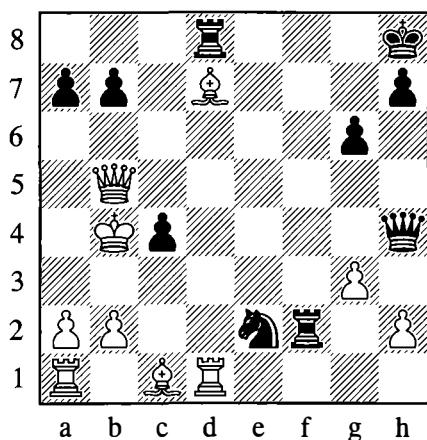
25. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{E}xe1$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{E}e2$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{E}xh2$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $g5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}h1$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $b6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $g4$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$



18. $\mathbb{W}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 19. $\mathbb{R}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$

19... $\mathbb{Q}xg2?$! 20. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}xh2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$
22. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{R}xe2\rightarrow$

20. $g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}b4$



22... $\mathbb{W}f6$

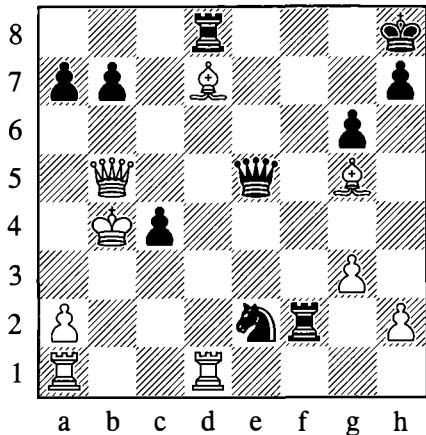
22... $\mathbb{W}e7\#$? looks to be enough for a draw:
23. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $c3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}g7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f4$
 $\mathbb{R}xb2$ 27. $\mathbb{W}c5$ $b6$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}c6\#$
30. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c5\#$ 31. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}xb4\#$
(32... $\mathbb{Q}xa1\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}c6\#$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\#$
35. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 36. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7=$) 33. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$
 $\mathbb{W}c4\#$ =

23. $\mathbb{Q}g5?$

White should prefer 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$
24. $\mathbb{R}ax1$ $\mathbb{R}xb2$ 25. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{W}a6\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}a3\#$

27. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}e2$, when Black retains reasonable compensation for the material but any result is possible.

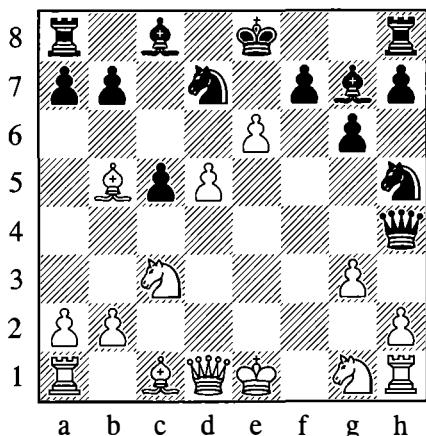
23... $\mathbb{W}xb2\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{W}e5\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b4$



25... $a5\#$! → 26. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{W}a8\#$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}b8$
28. $\mathbb{W}b2\#$ $c3$ 29. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 30. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{W}a7\#$
31. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $b5\#$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{W}b6\#$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$
34. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7\#$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{W}c7\#$
37. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{W}d8\#$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{W}e2\#$ 39. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$
40. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}g8\#$ 41. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{W}g7\#$

J. Ivanov – Cheparinov, Seville 2004.

B) 12. $g3!$

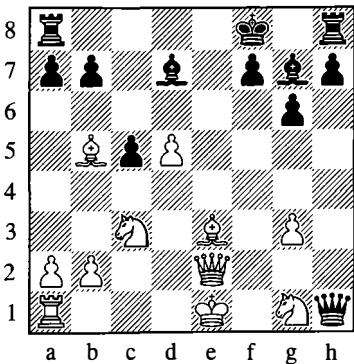


Unfortunately this move takes most of the fun out of Black's position.

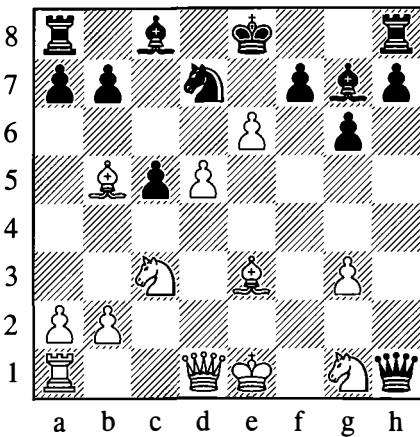
12...Qxg3 13.hxg3 Wxh1 14.Qe3

A simple move, but a strong one.

14.exd7†? Qxd7 is poor: 15.We2† (15.Qxd7† Qxd7 16.Wg4† f5 17.Wa4† Qc8 18.Qe3 Qxc3† 19.bxc3 Wxd5 20.Qd1 Wc6 21.Wxc6† bxc6 22.Qxc5 Bb8# Thorsteins – Ashley, New York 1989.) 15...Qf8 16.Qe3

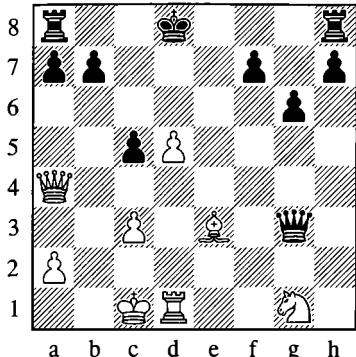


16...Bc8! 17.Qxd7 Bxe3 18.Wxe3 Qd4 19.Wf3 Wxg1† 20.Wf1 Wxg3† 21.Qd2 Qg7 22.Wh3 Qxc3† 23.bxc3 Wg5† 24.Qc2 Wxd5† Kantsler – Battaglini, Herzliya 2009.



14...Qxc3†!

14...Wg2 is worse: 15.exd7† Qxd7 16.Qxd7† Qxd7 17.Wa4† Qd8 (17...Qc8 18.0–0–0 Wxg3 19.Qf4 Wg4 20.d6 Wd7 21.Wc4†) 18.0–0–0 Qxc3 19.bxc3 Wxg3

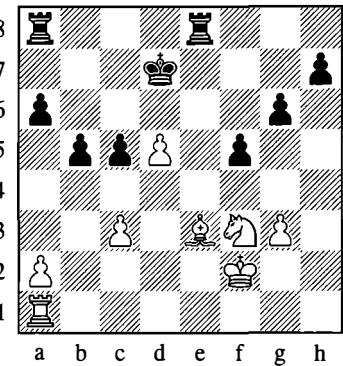


20.Qd3! The position may appear close to equal, but after a few moves the white knight comes into play with great effect. 20...Wd6 21.Qf3 f6 22.Qd2 b6 23.Qe4 Wd7 (23...We5 24.Qh6+) 24.Qa6 We7 25.Qxf6! Wxf6 26.Wb7+ Soucha – Hlavac, corr. 2005.

15.bxc3 a6 16.exd7† Qxd7† 17.Qxd7† Qxd7 18.Wg4†!

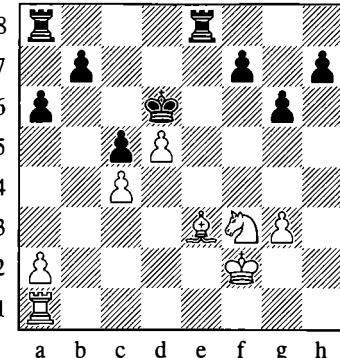
It is important to provoke Black's next move in order to weaken the dark squares. Other moves are less challenging:

18.Wa4† b5 19.Wg4† (19.Wf4 Bh8 20.0–0–0 We4†) 19...f5 20.Wf3 Wxf3 21.Qxf3 Bh8 22.Qf2



Ziegler seems to believe that White is better here but after 22...Be4 23.Qxc5 Bc8! I think Black is okay. Compared with the position reached after move 22 in the main line, here Black has the extra move ...b5 which should help him.

18. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{E}he8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 21.c4 20... $\mathbb{W}g2$ 21.d6 $\mathbb{E}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d5$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}a7$



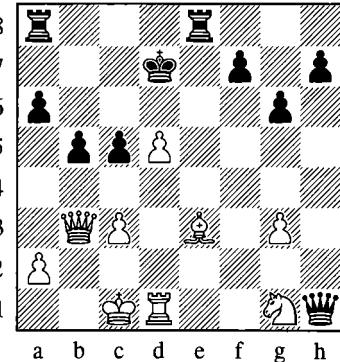
21...f6! This is the difference when the f-pawn has not been lured to f5. 22. $\mathbb{E}b1$ b5 23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ g5 24. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 25. $\mathbb{E}d1$ h5 26. $\mathbb{Q}e4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{E}xe4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{E}e8\uparrow$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ bxc4 29. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}e5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}f5\uparrow$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}f2$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}f5$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}f2$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}f5$ ½–½ Illescas Cordoba – Topalov, Alcobendas 1994.

White's final option is:

18. $\mathbb{W}b3$

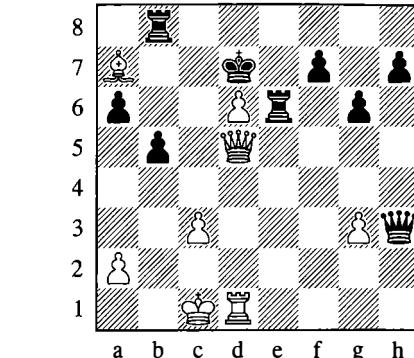
But attempting to play for an attack gives Black good counter-chances.

18...b5 19.0–0–0 $\mathbb{E}he8$



20. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

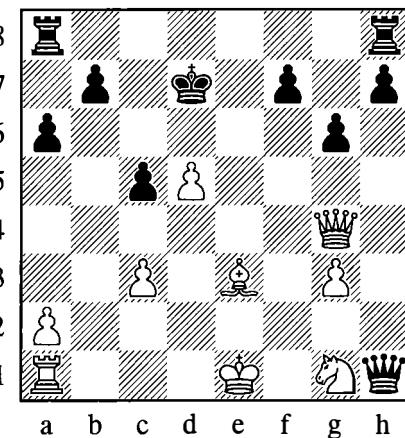
20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}f5$ 22.g4? $\mathbb{W}xg4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}a3$ occurred in Kuljasevic – Cebalo, Zagreb 2012, and now 23... $\mathbb{E}e4N$ would have been winning for Black.



24... $\mathbb{W}xg3\uparrow N$

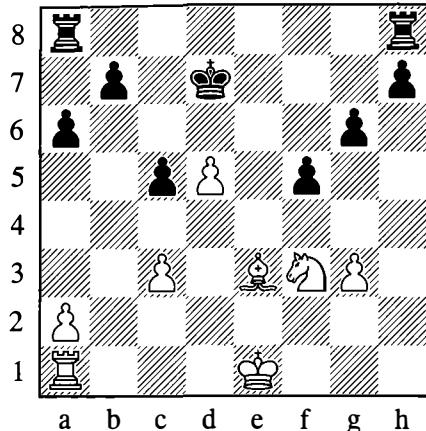
24... $\mathbb{W}h6\uparrow$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 26.g4 $\mathbb{W}e8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ $\mathbb{W}xb8$ 28. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 29. $\mathbb{E}xf7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ was agreed drawn in Lautier – Degraeve, Clichy 2001.

25. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ $\mathbb{W}xc3\uparrow$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}b4\uparrow$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}a1=$



18...f5 19. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

White's chances are clearly higher in this endgame. I believe Black should be able to hold it, but unfortunately he has virtually no winning chances. From a practical perspective, the only good thing is that White has had no real chance to deviate since move 12, so if you are happy to take your chances in the endgame, you can reach it without having to do much preparation.



20... $\mathbb{E}he8!$

Black was facing a difficult case of the “which rook?” problem, but after analysing both of them I am pretty sure the king’s rook should be preferred.

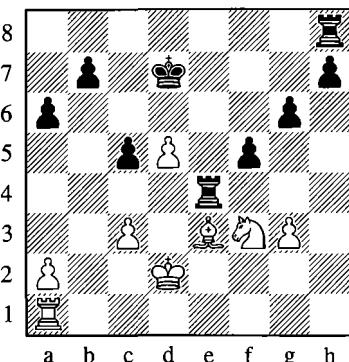
20... $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$

21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}e4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ (23. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$) 23... $\mathbb{E}ce8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}8e5$ 25. $\mathbb{E}h1$ h5

26. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}c8=$

21... $\mathbb{E}e4$

21...c4?! 22. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ \pm



22. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$

It is too early for White to attempt to steal a pawn: 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 25. $\mathbb{E}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 26.g4 is equal.

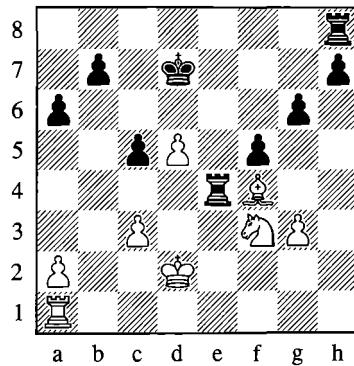
22. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ also fails to achieve any advantage:

22... $\mathbb{E}a4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ h5 (23...b5 24. $\mathbb{E}e1$ h6

25. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}g4=)$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f7$ $\mathbb{E}e8$

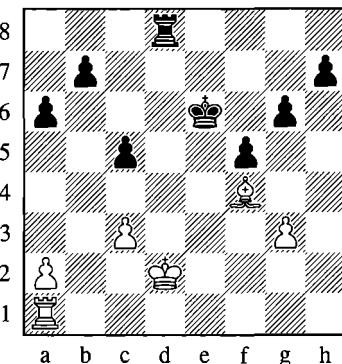
25. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{E}a5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 27.c4 $\mathbb{E}a5$ 28.a4

b5 (28... $\mathbb{E}e6$ 29.c5 $\mathbb{E}e7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$ $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{E}xc5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$) 29. $\mathbb{Q}e5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 30. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6=$



22... $\mathbb{Q}d8$

This fails to equalize, but 22... $\mathbb{E}he8?$ is even worse: 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{E}e2\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ h5 25.a4 $\mathbb{E}el$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xe1$ $\mathbb{E}xe1$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 28.a5+– 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{E}xe6$ 25.dxe6# $\mathbb{Q}xe6\#$



26. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ c4 27. $\mathbb{E}b1$ b5 28.a4 $\mathbb{E}d5$ 29.axb5 axb5±

White has good winning chances.

21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$

White can consider a different king move:

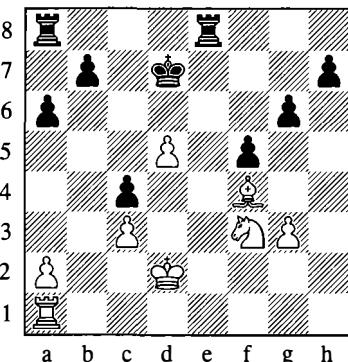
21. $\mathbb{Q}d2!?$ c4!

21... $\mathbb{E}e4!?$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{E}a4$ (22... $\mathbb{E}e5$ 23.c4 $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc5\pm$ $\mathbb{E}e2\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}g2$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\pm$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{E}h8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$

22. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

Attempting to exploit the absence of a black rook on the h-file leads nowhere: 22. $\mathbb{E}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xh7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24. $\mathbb{E}d7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 25. $\mathbb{E}g7$ $\mathbb{E}g8?$! 26. $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}ab8=$

Compare this position to the analogous one occurring in the 20... $\mathbb{E}ae8$ line analysed above. In that variation I dismissed the position as clearly better for White, but having a rook on a8 instead of h8 changes the assessment.

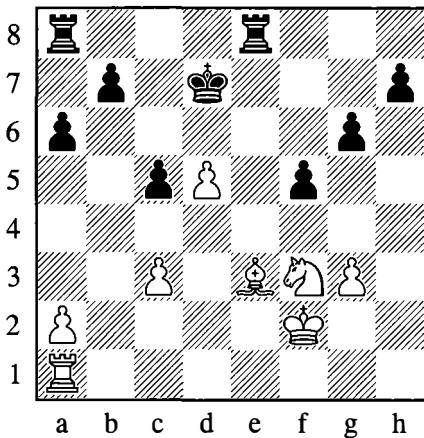


22... $\mathbb{E}ad8!$

Of course! Having another rook in play makes all the difference.

23. $\mathbb{E}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 24. $d6$ $h5$ 25. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $h4!$ 26. $gxh4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xh4?$ is refuted by 26... $g5!$.
26... $\mathbb{E}e4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 28. $d7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 29. $\mathbb{E}xb7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 30. $\mathbb{E}a7=$

An equal rook endgame will ensue.



21... $\mathbb{E}e4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

White is not helped by 22. $\mathbb{Q}g5?!$ $\mathbb{E}c4\mp$ or 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}a4=.$

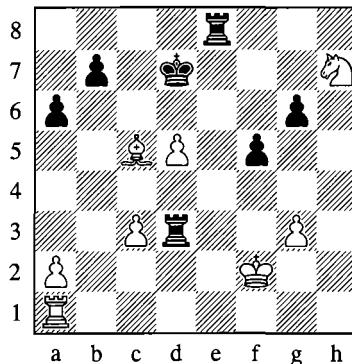
After the text move Black has good drawing chances, but little hope of winning.

22... $\mathbb{E}c8$

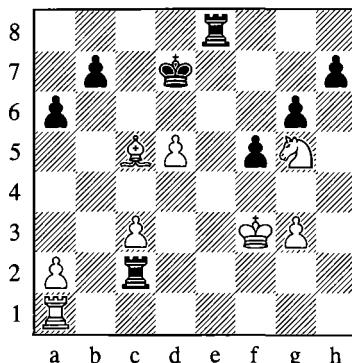
The other tempting rook move is worse:

22... $\mathbb{E}ae8?!$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{E}e2\uparrow$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}c2$

24... $\mathbb{E}d2?!$ may be a better chance, although Black is still struggling to hold: 25. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{E}d3\uparrow$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f2!$ (After 26. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{E}e4\uparrow$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{E}xg3\uparrow$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{E}h4\uparrow$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $\mathbb{E}xh7\uparrow$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{E}xc3$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{E}d3$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $f4\uparrow$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $\mathbb{E}d3$ 35. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $f3$ Black has good chances to draw.)

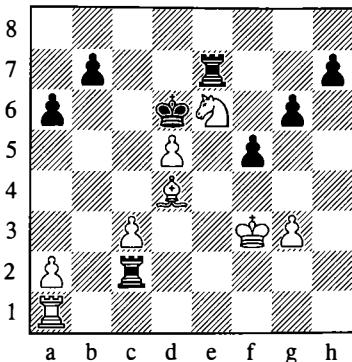


26... $\mathbb{E}d2\uparrow N$ (26... $\mathbb{E}h8?$ 27. $\mathbb{E}h1$ $\mathbb{E}xd5$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f8\uparrow$ 1–0 Housieaux – Vuilleumier, France 2009.) 27. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{E}h8$ 29. $a4$ $\mathbb{E}h1\uparrow$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}g1\pm$



25.♕b4

25.♕d4 is also promising: 25...♝e7 26.♕e6 (26.♗b1 ♕d6 27.♗h3 b5 28.a4±) 26...♕d6 Rej – Smerdon, Canberra 2007.



27.♗b1!N (27.♗e1?!N ♕xd5 28.♕f4† ♕d6

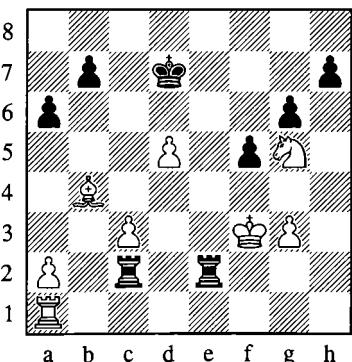
29.♕c5† ♕xc5 30.♗xe7 ♘xc3† 31.♗f2 ♘c2† 32.♗e3 ♘xa2±) 27...b5 28.a4 ♕xd5 29.♗f4† ♕c6 30.axb5† axb5 31.♗d3 ♘d2 32.♗e5† ♕c7 33.♗xb5±

25...♝ee2?!N

I tried to improve Black's play, but the idea falls short. I doubt that the alternatives are any better.

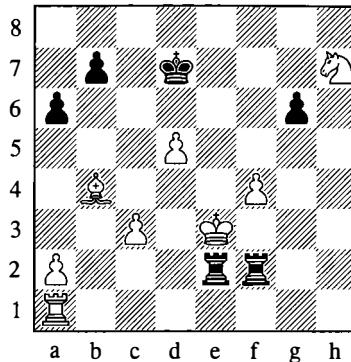
25...h6 occurred in Summerscale – Snape, Coulsdon 2010, and now 26.♗e6± would have been the easiest solution.

25...♝h2?!N is also unsatisfactory: 26.♗e6 b6 27.♗b1! ♘xa2 28.♗h1 h5 29.♗f8† ♘d8 30.♗xg6±



26.♗xh7 ♘f2†

26...♘xa2 27.♗f6† ♘d8 28.♗xa2 ♘xa2 29.♗f8 ♘a1 30.♗e2 ♘a2† 31.♗d3 ♘a1 32.d6 ♘e1 33.♗c4 ♘e5 34.♗d4 ♘e1 35.♗c5+– 27.♗e3 f4† 28.gxf4 ♘ce2†

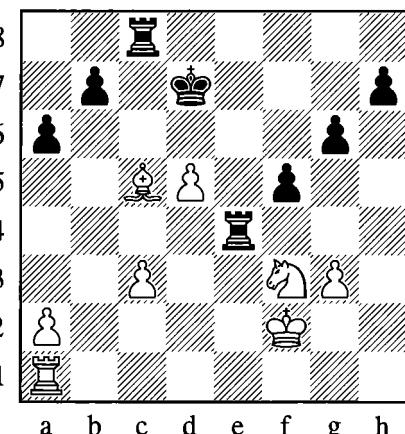


29.♗d3!

The most accurate, although 29.♗d4 ♘xf4† 30.♗d3 ♘e5 31.♗f8† ♘e8 32.♗xg6 ♘xd5† 33.♗e3 ♘f6 34.♗f4† also gives White good winning chances.

29...♗d2† 30.♗c4 ♘xf4† 31.♗b3 ♘xd5 32.♗f8† ♘e8 33.♗e1† ♘f7 34.♗e7† ♘g8 35.♗xg6+–

The conclusion is that 22...♝ae8?! fails to equalize. If Black is determined to explore this path then the 24...♗d2?! line looks like the way to go, although I am not convinced that it represents an improvement over the main line.



23. \mathbb{Q} d4 \mathbb{Q} d6 24. \mathbb{B} d1

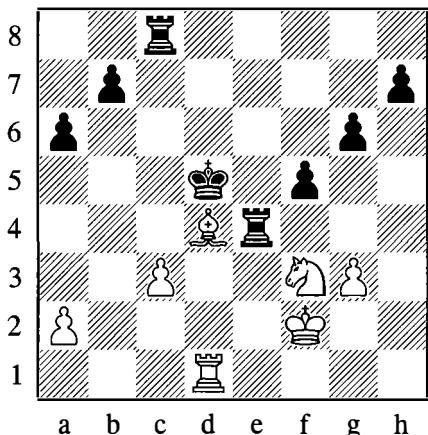
White was eventually successful with 24. \mathbb{Q} g5 \mathbb{E} e7 25. \mathbb{B} h1 \mathbb{Q} xd5 26. \mathbb{Q} xh7 in Barkhagen – Ziegler, Sweden 2008, but at this stage Black could have equalized with either 26...b5!N or 26... \mathbb{Q} c4!N.

24... \mathbb{Q} xd5

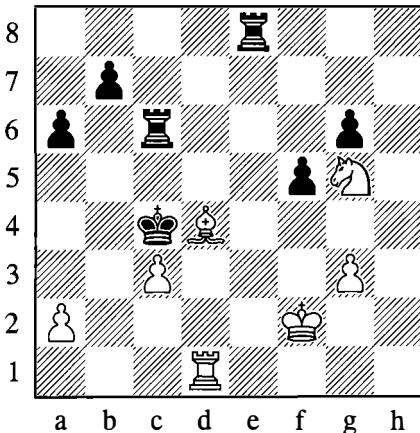
I checked a couple of other ideas, but in this case the obvious move is the best:

24...h6?!N 25. \mathbb{Q} h4 \mathbb{E} g4 26. \mathbb{Q} g2 b5 27. \mathbb{Q} e3 \mathbb{E} e4 28. \mathbb{Q} e2±

24...b5?!N 25. \mathbb{Q} g5 \mathbb{E} e7 26. \mathbb{B} d3 \mathbb{E} c4 27. \mathbb{Q} f3 \mathbb{E} a4 28. \mathbb{Q} e5†±



25. \mathbb{Q} g5 \mathbb{E} ee8 26. \mathbb{Q} xh7 \mathbb{Q} c4 27. \mathbb{Q} g5!
27.a4 \mathbb{E} e7 28. \mathbb{Q} f6 \mathbb{E} c6 29. \mathbb{B} b1 \mathbb{E} f7 30. \mathbb{B} b4† \mathbb{Q} d3 31. \mathbb{Q} d5 g5=

27... \mathbb{B} c6**28. \mathbb{B} b1?N**

28.a4 led to an eventual victory for White in Schoen – Blokh, corr. 1995, but I like the more forcing approach.

28...b5

28... \mathbb{E} e7 29. \mathbb{Q} h3 \mathbb{Q} d3 30. \mathbb{B} b2±

29.a4 bxa4 30. \mathbb{B} b4† \mathbb{Q} d3 31. \mathbb{B} xa4†

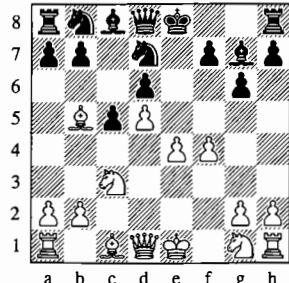
Black will have to defend for a good while longer.

Conclusion

This was a chapter of two contrasting sections. In variation A White grabbed a material advantage, but in return Black obtained a long-lasting initiative and excellent practical compensation. Unfortunately variation B was a different story, and led to a one-sided endgame in which I see little chance of Black winning. For this reason, I would not recommend using 8... \mathbb{Q} bd7 as your primary response against the Flick-Knife Attack. However, it might have some value as a surprise weapon, especially at rapid time controls where there is more chance of the opponent making a mistake somewhere.



f4 Systems



Flick-Knife Attack – 8...♞fd7 without 9.a4

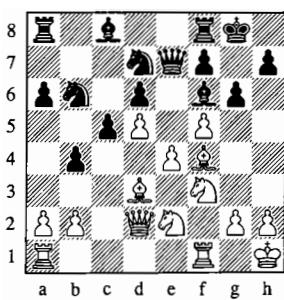
Variation Index

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f4 ♖g7 8.♗b5†

8...♞fd7

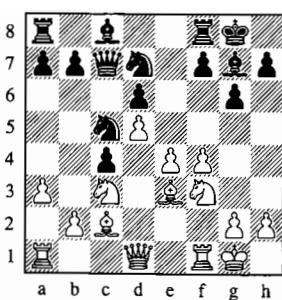
A) 9.♘f3	43
B) 9.♗d3	44
C) 9.♗e2	46
C1) 9...0–0	46
C2) 9...♛h4†	47

A) note to 12...♝e8



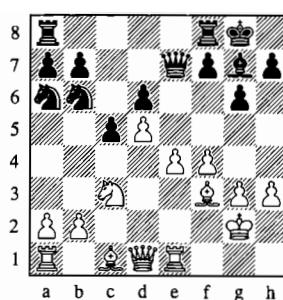
17...a5N

B) after 14.♗e3



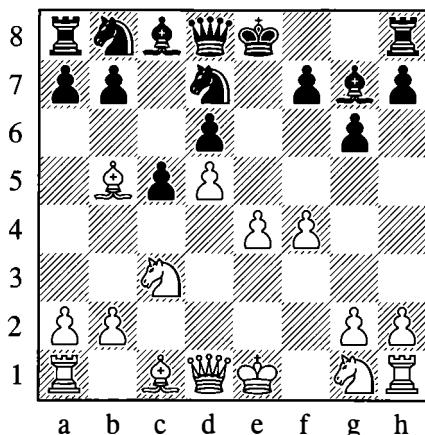
14...♝b8N

C2) note to 10...♛d8?



16...c4!?

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$



This is the most reliable method of blocking the bishop check. Black now has a positional threat of ...a6, when White must either relinquish the bishop pair or allow ...b5. For this reason he normally continues 9.a4, which can be found in the next two chapters. In the coming pages we will look at the following alternatives: A) 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$, B) 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and C) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$.

A) 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

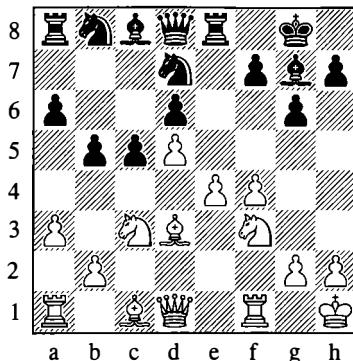
This line is not dangerous, and Black will be happy to expand on the queenside with ...b5. Meanwhile the knight on d7 helps to restrain any early e4-e5 ideas, thus allowing Black to finish his development in peace.

9...a6 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

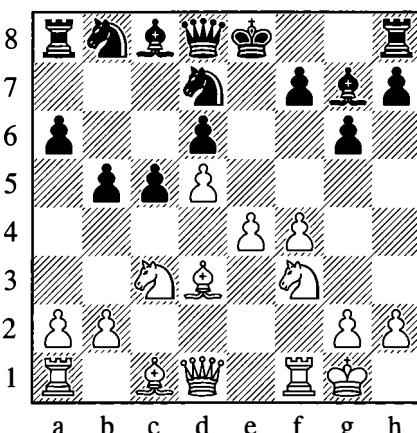
10. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 11.a4 prevents ...b5, but giving up the bishop is arguably an even greater concession from White. Play continues 11...0-0 12.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ and Black should be fine.

10...b5 11.0-0

Another game continued: 11.a3 0-0 12.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ can also be met by 13... $\mathbb{Q}a7\uparrow$ N 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ with reasonable play for Black.)



13... $\mathbb{Q}a7\uparrow$? It is worth remembering this method of activating the rook in positions where ...b5 (or ...b6) has been played. 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15.b4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ Black obtained sufficient counterplay along the c-file in Gonzalez Garcia – Lie, Turin (ol) 2006.



11...0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

12.a3 leads to the previous note. After the text move there are several decent possibilities for Black.

12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

Another option to consider is:

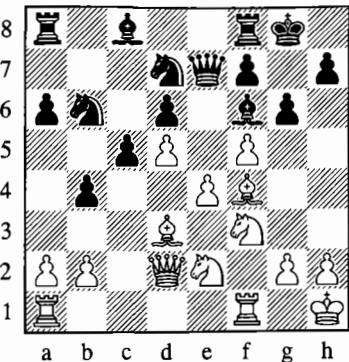
12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 13.f5 b4!?

This leads to highly complex play.

13... $\mathbb{Q}8d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ was about equal in Glek – Anikaev, Minsk 1983.

14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}8d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

16... $\mathbb{Q}xb2?$ N 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{W}xf8$
 19. $\mathbb{W}xa1$ c4 20. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ c3 \Rightarrow
 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$



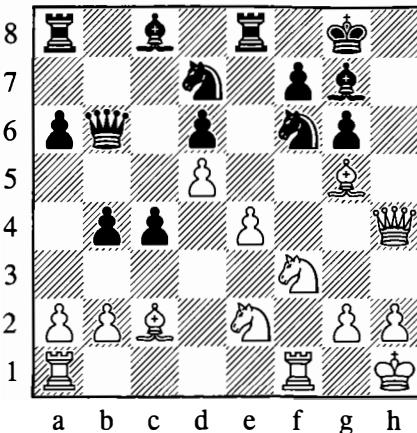
17...a5N

I think Black should improve his position before jumping with the knight in the centre. 17... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ allowed White to make some progress on the kingside in the following game: 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 20.f6 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{B}a7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}ael$ a5± Fiala – Claridge, e-mail 2002.

18. $\mathbb{E}acl$ $\mathbb{B}e8$

The position is unclear but roughly balanced in my view.

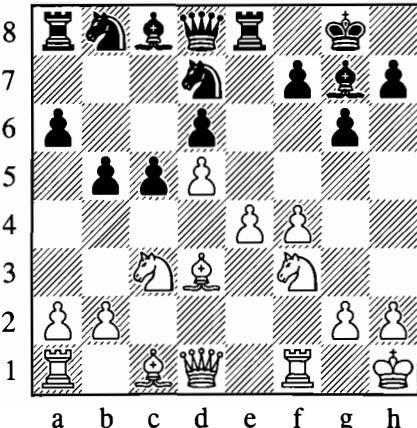
14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 15.fxg6 hxg6 16. $\mathbb{W}el$ c4
 17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b4 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h4$



19... $\mathbb{Q}h7!$ \Rightarrow

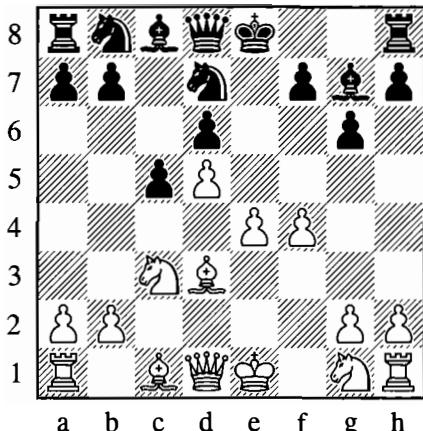
A draw was agreed here in Travnik – Vrkoc, corr. 2003, and indeed it seems to me that Black's chances are not worse. By the way, the tempting 19... $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ should be avoided on account of 20. $\mathbb{Q}fd4!$ when 20... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ runs into 21. $\mathbb{E}xf7!$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}h7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}f1\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}h4$ with a decisive attack.

B) 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



13.f5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

13...b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ gxf5 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ (15.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}f6\Rightarrow$) 15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ gave White a strong attack in M. Kaufmann – Compagnone, e-mail 1999.



This often transposes to one of the 9.a4 variations, as there is a good chance that White will want to restrain ...b5 at some point.

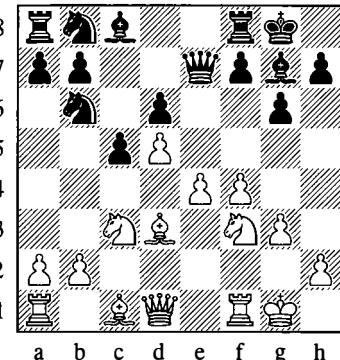
9...0-0

Black can also play by analogy with Chapter 5:

9... $\mathbb{W}h4\uparrow$ 10.g3 $\mathbb{W}e7$

10... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 12.0-0 a6 13.a4 transposes to variation A22 in Chapter 5 – see page 54.

11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 12.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b6$

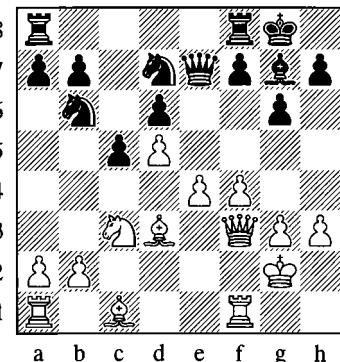


13. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

13.f5 $\mathbb{Q}8d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d2$ occurred in Ravikumar – Thorsteins, Copenhagen 1982, and here 18... $\mathbb{Q}d7N$ seems logical, when the position remains about equal.

13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3\uparrow$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}8d7$

15...c4 is perhaps a bit too ambitious:
16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$
19. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 20. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ b5 21.e5 b4 22.axb4
 $\mathbb{E}xb4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c1\pm$ Lau – Dolmatov, Graz 1981.



16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$

16...c4?! loosened Black's position and gave White an edge in Van Wely – Topalov, Monte Carlo (blind) 2004.

17. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 18.g4 c4

Now is a better time to get active, as all of Black's pieces are in play.

19. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\rightarrow$

Ackley – Hanison, England 2000.

10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$??

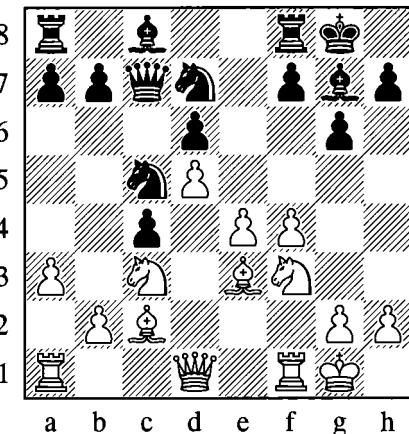
This is an independent line. Alternatively, 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 11.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ (11... $\mathbb{E}b8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13.a4 a6 also transposes to Chapter 6) 12.a4 a6 13. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ reaches variation A3 of Chapter 6 – see page 65.

11.0-0 c4

Black should always think carefully about the timing of this move, but here it seems to work okay.

12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13.a3 $\mathbb{Q}ac5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Here the most logical continuation seems to be:

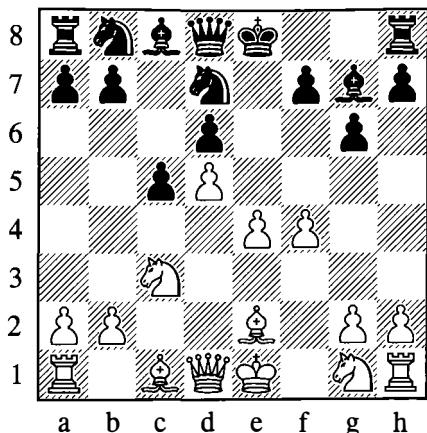
**14... $\mathbb{E}b8N$**

14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$?! failed to equalize in Van Wely – Pantsulaia, Dubai 2012.

15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ b5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d4\uparrow$ f6
18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19.f5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$

21.♗xb6 ♜xb6 22.dxe6 ♜b7?

I think Black is okay here. The e6-pawn is mighty indeed, but Black has a beautiful knight on e5 and a useful queenside majority.

C) 9.♕e2

With this move White steers the game towards a version of the Four Pawns, where the black knight is on d7 instead of f6. Let's see who will derive the greater benefit from this difference. It is worth analysing both C1) 9...0-0 and C2) 9...♗h4†.

C1) 9...0-0 10.♘f3 ♜e8

This was the choice of one of the greatest Benoni players of all, in a game that we will follow shortly. Black can also consider doing without the rook move:

10...♘a6

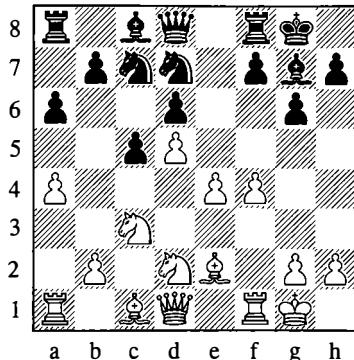
With the d7-square blocked, the knight has no real choice but to head for c7, so it is reasonable to consider doing so immediately.

11.0-0 ♘c7 12.a4 a6

12...♜e8 might transpose to the Furman – Tal game in the main line if White responds with 13.♘d2.

13.♘d2

Now Black has the option to play for complications.



13...f5?! 14.♘c4??

This dynamic move only leads to equality. Perhaps White should prefer 14.exf5 gxf5 15.♘c4 as played in Hua Lefong – Dias, Yerevan 1997. Here 15...♞f6N 16.♗f3 ♜e8 looks best, reaching a complex position where White's chances are slightly higher.

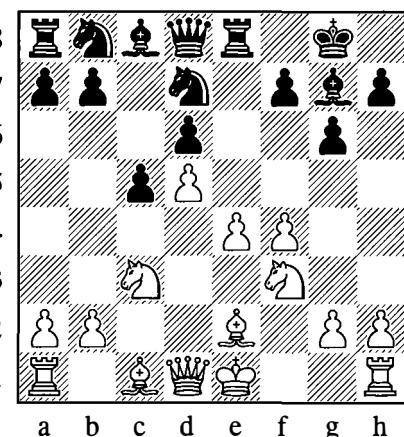
14...fxe4 15.♘xd6

15.♘xe4 ♜f6 16.♘exd6 ♜fxd5 17.♘xc8

♞xc8= Gilimshin – Grigoryev, e-mail 2003.

15...♝d4† 16.♔h1 ♜f6 17.♘xc8 ♜xc8=

Arnelind – Nikolov, Rethymnon 2011.

**11.0-0 ♘a6**

11...♞xc3?! is too risky. 12.bxc3 ♜xe4 13.♘d3 ♜e8 14.c4 ♜f6 Now in Shafei – Sabitov, Kuala Lumpur 1993, White could have obtained good attacking chances with 15.f5!N↑.

12.♘d2 ♜c7 13.a4 ♜f6

Black accepts the loss of a tempo, but it does not harm his chances too much.

14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b6

This method of developing the bishop is quite typical, and works well here.

15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$

Exchanging the bishop will ease the congestion in Black's camp.

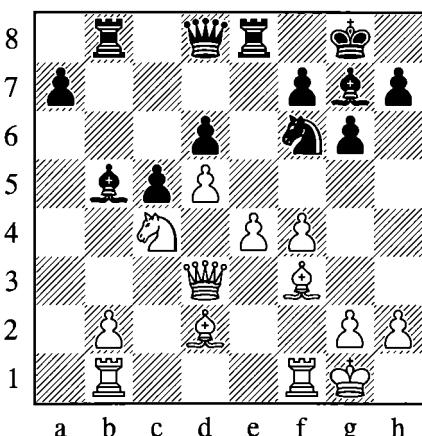
16. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1!$?

White should prefer 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ a6 with a balanced position, as in Putzbach – Kolthoff, Pinneberg 2001.

17...b5! 18.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

20. $\mathbb{Q}d2?$

20.b3N was necessary although Black would have remained at least equal.



20... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

23. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4\#$

Furman – Tal, Tbilisi 1959.

C2) 9... $\mathbb{W}h4\#$

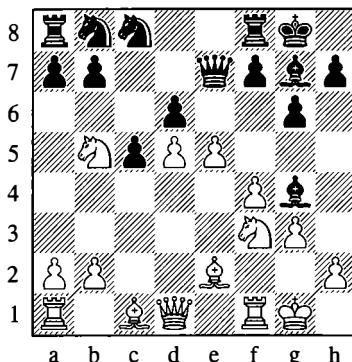
With this move Black takes the opportunity to provoke a kingside weakness before the knight comes to f3.

10.g3 $\mathbb{W}d8!$?

The queen goes all the way back to d8 in order to keep the e-file clear for the rook. Also possible is:

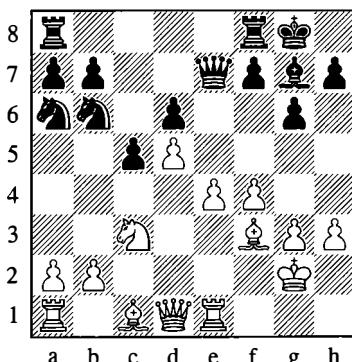
10... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0

11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$! is a rare move, which has the idea of immediately opening the diagonal for the bishop: 12.e5 0–0 13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$



15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$!N (15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ a6 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ dx5 18.f5 gxf5 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ Baron Rodriguez – Glavina Rossi, Spain 2004.) 15...a6 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ dx5 18.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20.d6 $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{W}e6\#$

12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$



16...c4!N

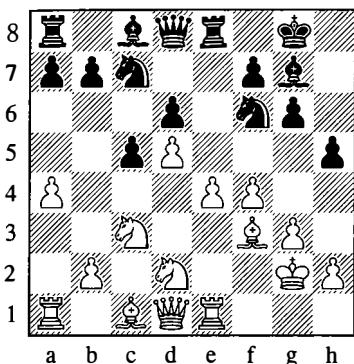
This move is slightly provocative, but it seems playable and interesting.

16... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ was also roughly level in Gutov – Miroshnichenko, Dubai 2011.

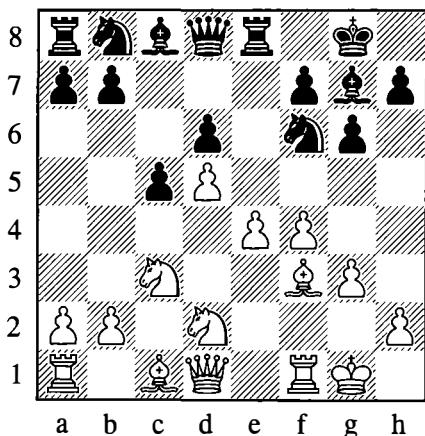
17.e5 dx5 18.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}ae8\#$

11.♘f3 0-0 12.0-0 ♘e8 13.♘d2

13.♗g2?! is inadvisable: 13...♞a6 14.♗e1 ♖c7 15.♘d2 ♗f6 16.a4 h5 17.♗f3



17...♗d7 18.♗f1 This position was reached in Oms Pallisse – Berbatov, Balaguer 2010, and here 18...♗h3†N 19.♗g1 ♗g4 would have put White under pressure.

13...♗f6 14.♗f3**14...♗h3!**

Black needs to improve on:

14...h5 15.♘c4 b5?!

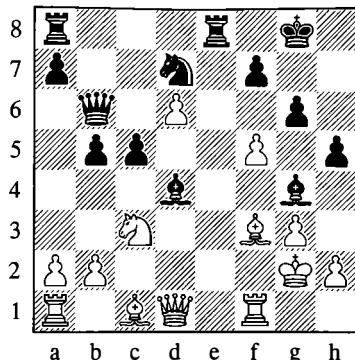
Once again 15...♗h3N is a better option:

16.♗e1 ♗g4

16.♘xd6 ♗xd6 17.e5 ♗b6 18.d6 ♗g4 19.exf6 ♗xf6 20.f5 ♗d4† 21.♗g2 ♗d7?

The lesser evil was: 21...gxf5N 22.h3 ♗xf3†

23.♗xf3 ♗d7 24.♗xf5±



22.fxg6 fxg6

V. Georgiev – Quillan, Sunny Beach 2011.

23.♗d5†N ♗e6 24.♗f3+–

15.♗e1 ♗d7 16.♘c4 ♗g4

Black is making good use of the weakened light squares on White's kingside.

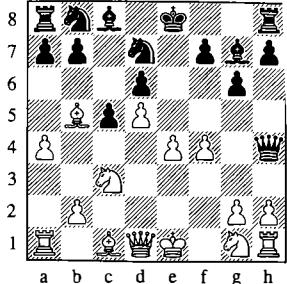
Conclusion

In the first of the three main lines examined in the chapter, we saw Black easily obtaining a good position after mobilizing his queenside pawns. The two bishop retreats are a bit more challenging, but both of them give Black a choice of playable lines. Against 9.♗d3 he can either transpose to Chapter 5 or try the independent line analysed in section B. The other retreat 9.♗e2 allows Black to choose between castling and checking on h4; once again, his chances are decent in both cases.

Chapter 5

f4 Systems

Flick-Knife Attack – 9.a4 $\mathbb{W}h4\ddagger$

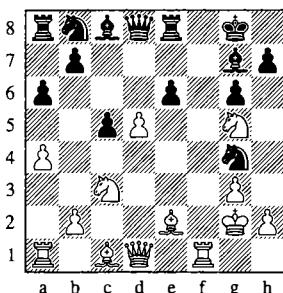


Variation Index

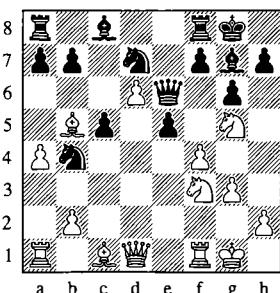
1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5\ddagger$
8... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 9.a4 $\mathbb{W}h4\ddagger$ 10.g3

A) 10... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0 12.0–0	50
A1) 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$	50
A2) 12...a6	52
A21) 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$	52
A22) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$	54
A221) 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$	54
A222) 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$	57
B) 10... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0 12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}a6$	58
B1) 13.e5	58
B2) 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$	59

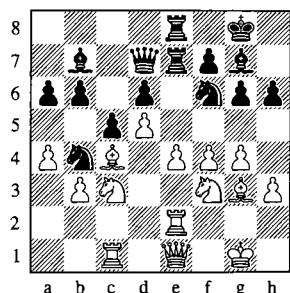
A21) note to 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$



B1) after 16.Qeg5



B2) note to 16.Qf2

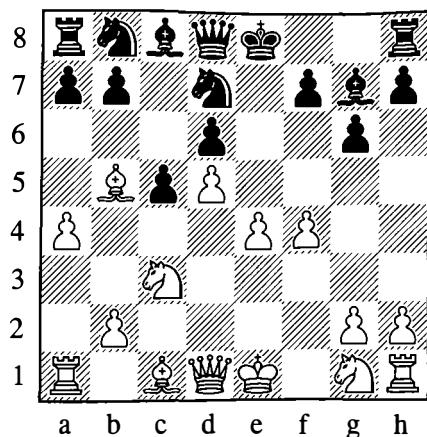


18... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\text{N}$

16... $\mathbb{W}e8!\text{N}$

24...h5! N

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5
d6 6.e4 g6 7.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 9.a4



For a time this line was believed to be almost winning for White, but we will find out that the rumours of Black's demise are premature. From this position the main line is the natural 9...0–0, which we will deal with in the next chapter beginning on page 62. Over the coming pages we will analyse an interesting alternative for Black.

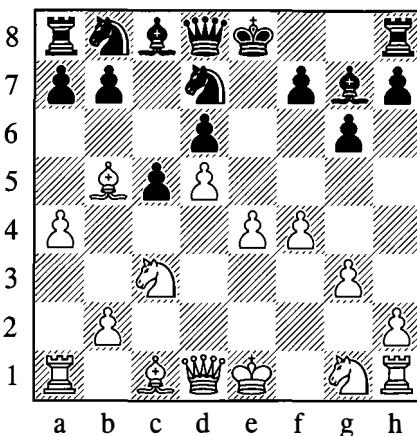
9... $\mathbb{W}h4\uparrow$

This strange-looking move has gained in popularity in recent years. Although checks are usually thought of as aggressive, this move is actually played with more defensive ideas in mind. An important point is that, after the forced 10.g3, White's dark-squared bishop will be unable to reach the g3- and h4-squares, which it might otherwise occupy for attacking purposes in the middlegame. Black may also look to post his bishop on g4 or h3, and perhaps exchange it for White's light-squared bishop. Such simplifications will tend to favour the side with less space, and may pave the way for a subsequent counterattack with ...f5.

10.g3

Now there are two possibilities: A) 10... $\mathbb{W}d8$ and B) 10... $\mathbb{W}e7$.

A) 10... $\mathbb{W}d8$

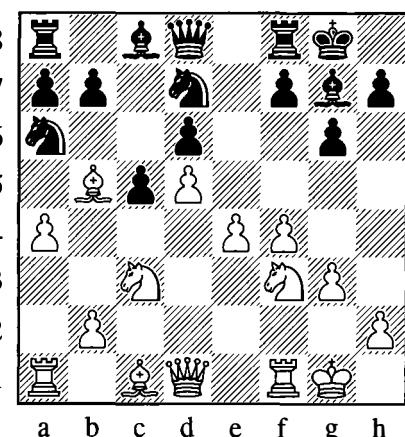


On the face of it this may look like a shocking waste of time, but White also will have to spend a few moves retreating the bishop to cover the weakened light squares on the kingside.

11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0 12.0–0

Now we will consider two ways for Black to develop his queenside: A1) 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ and A2) 12... $a6$.

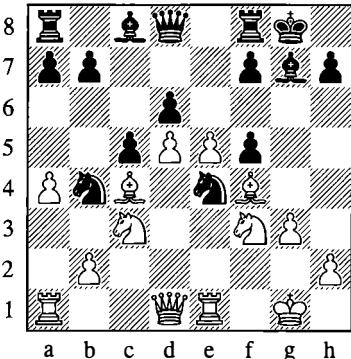
A1) 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$



13. $\mathbb{E}e1$

White can also continue aggressively: 13.f5!
 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $gxf5$ 15.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$

17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ This was Sasikiran – Berg, Warsaw 2008. White certainly has compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but Black is not without his chances. The right continuation is:

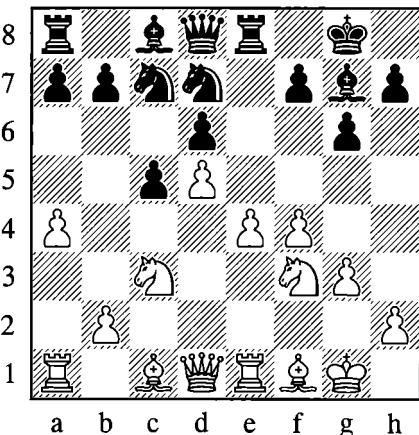


17...dxe5N 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ With an unclear position, as noted by Sasikiran.

13... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

14. $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ N is uncontested but looks interesting. The idea is to lure the enemy knight to the slightly unfavourable b6-square, for instance: 14... $\mathbb{E}e8$ (14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xf3\pm$) 15. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f1\pm$

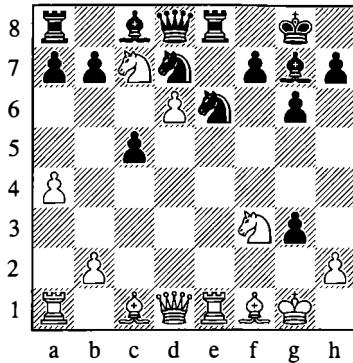
14... $\mathbb{E}e8$



15. $h3$

I also considered 15. $e5!?$ N when a funny line is possible: 15...dxe5 16. $d6$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{E}xf4$

18. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $f\mathbb{x}g3$

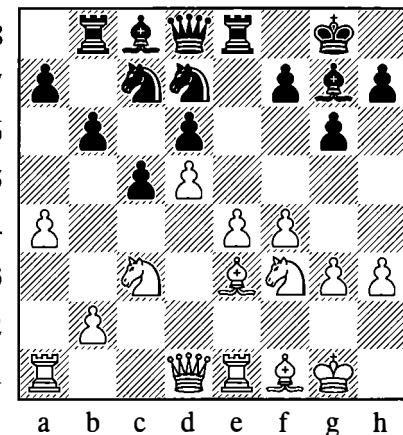


19. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $gxh2\uparrow$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 22. $dxc7$ $\mathbb{W}xc7$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xe8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8\bar{\infty}$ Black has given up a rook for four pawns (after the one on h2 drops) plus the initiative.

15... $\mathbb{E}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $b6$

Black can also consider 16... $a6!?$ N immediately, as after 17. $a5$ $b5$ 18. $axb6$ $\mathbb{E}xb6$ the position is balanced.

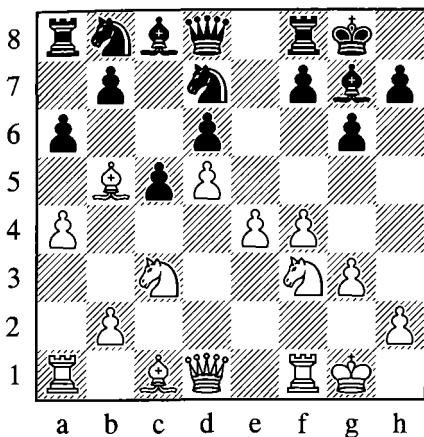
16... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!?$ N is also playable, although White will get enough compensation: 17. $bxcc3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (17... $\mathbb{E}xe4$ 18. $c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\bar{\infty}$) 18. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ (18... $\mathbb{Q}cx5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 20. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4=$) 19. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 20. $exd6$ $\mathbb{Q}7xd5$ 21. $\mathbb{W}b3\bar{\infty}$



17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $a6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $b5$ 19. $axb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

20. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $axb5=$

Fraczek – Brzeski, Krakow 2011.

A2) 12...a6

This is the main line. Now the two most important moves are **A21) 13.♘e2** and **A22) 13.♗d3**.

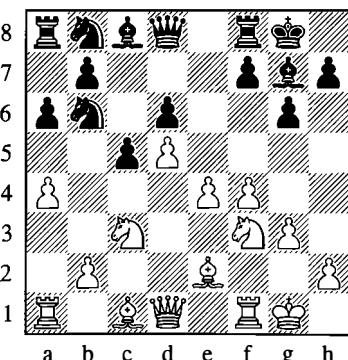
Less common is:

13.♕c4 ♔b6

Now the bishop might go anywhere. Here are a few examples.

14.♗e2

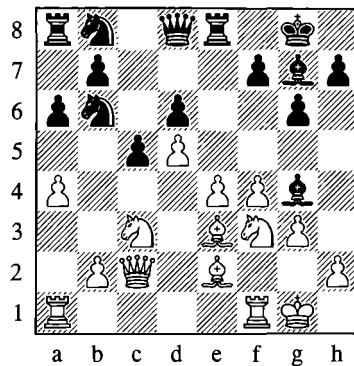
14.♗a2 ♔g4 15.♗e1 ♕e8 16.♗g2 ♔8d7
 17.a5 ♔c8 18.♗c4 b5 19.axb6 ♔cxb6
 20.♗f1 c4 21.h3 ♔xf3† 22.♔xf3 ♔c5= Jelen – Sax, Bled 2005.



14...♔g4 15.♗e3

This was played in a high-level game. Perhaps White could consider 15.a5 ♔c8 as in Nygard – Welti, e-mail 2006, and

now 16.♗b3!N b5 17.axb6 ♔xb6 18.♗g2 intending h2-h3 looks interesting.
15...♗e8 16.♗c2??

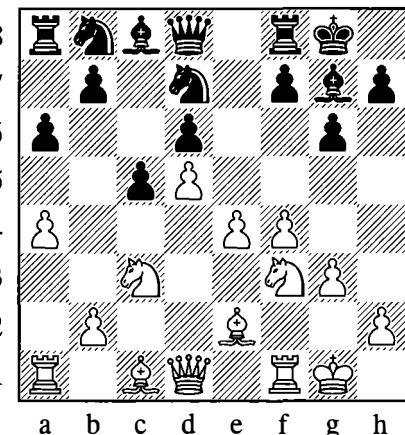


16...♕e7

This solid move is good, although Black can also grab a pawn with: 16...♗xc3!N 17.bxc3 ♗xe4! 18.♗g5 (18.♗xe4 ♔f5†) 18...♗xe3 19.♗xg4 ♔8d7†

17.e5 dxe5 18.fxe5 ♗xf3 19.♗xf3 ♔8d7†

Bareev – Gelfand, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005.

A21) 13.♘e2

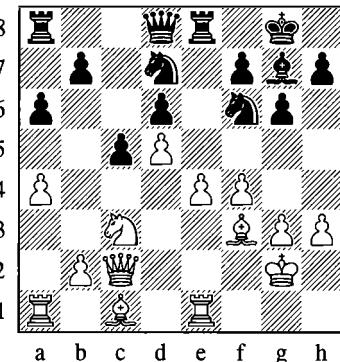
13...♗e8 14.♗g2

Another sensible move is:

14.♗c2 ♔f6

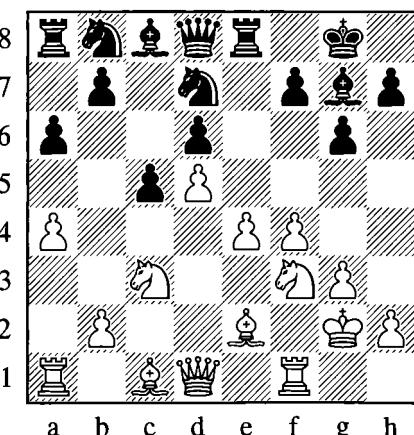
14...a5!N appears strange, but White is not in a position to attack the d6-pawn, so giving away the b5-square is not as big

a concession as it would be in some other Benoni variations. A possible continuation is: 15.f5 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 16.fxg6 $\mathbb{h}xg6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{B}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}e7\pm$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 18. $\mathbb{B}e1$



18...c4N

Improving over 18... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 19.a5 b5? 20.axb6± Pappier – Claridge, e-mail 2005.
19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ 20. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$
21... $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ is not working: 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xe1$ 24. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g4+-$
21... $\mathbb{Q}c5?$! is also unsatisfactory: 22.e5 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 23.exf6 $\mathbb{B}xe1$ 24.fxg7±
22.e5 dxe5 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 24. $\mathbb{B}e2$ $\mathbb{B}cd8\pm$
White keeps a slight edge here, although Black is not without chances.



14... $\mathbb{Q}xc3\text{?}$

This looks risky of course, but it seems to be playable.

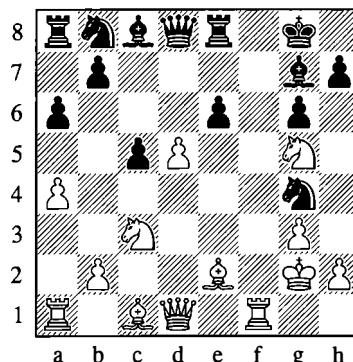
A sharp alternative is:

14... $\mathbb{B}f6$

This provokes a forcing line leading to an endgame.

15.e5 dxe5 16.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17.e6 fxe6 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

White can also consider 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4\text{?}$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ as in Filippas Ntekouan – Sperdokli, Kallithea 2008, and now 19.dxe6N $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 20. $\mathbb{B}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$.



18... $\mathbb{Q}xc3N$

Black needs an improvement over 18... $\mathbb{Q}f6$? 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 20.dxe6 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{B}axd8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$ Muir – Peicheva Hansen, Copenhagen 1990.

19.bxc3

19. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20.dxe6 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 25. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 26. $\mathbb{B}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{B}xe8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ leaves Black with fair compensation for the exchange, thanks to his extra pawn and excellent pieces.

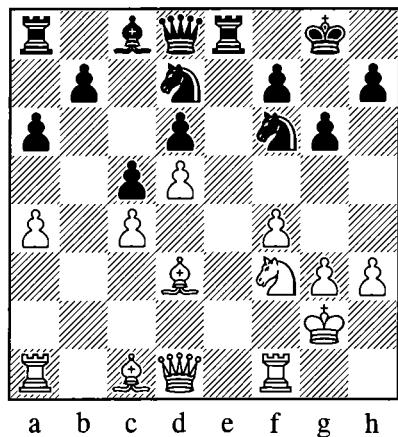
19... $\mathbb{W}xd5\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7\infty$

White has good compensation for two pawns, although it is hard to say if it is enough for him to claim an objective advantage.

15.bxc3 $\mathbb{B}xe4$

A possible improvement is: 15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$!N
16.e5 dx5 17.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 19.c4
 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ (19... $\mathbb{Q}c3$? 20. $\mathbb{W}xd8$ $\mathbb{W}xd8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6
22. $\mathbb{Q}g4+$ –) 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ fxe6=

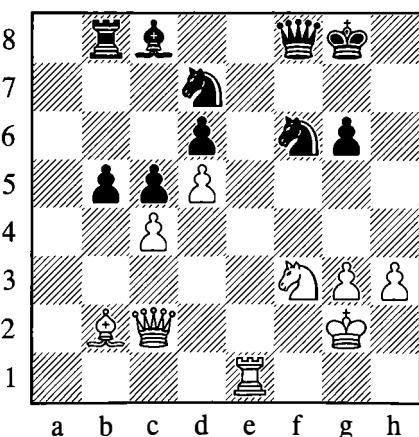
16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 17.c4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18.h3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$



19. $\mathbb{W}c2$!N

More accurate than 19. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d2$ b5 when the position was level in Clausen – Peicheva Hansen, Copenhagen 1989.

19... $\mathbb{W}b8$ 20.f5 b5 21.axb5 axb5 22.fxg6
 $\mathbb{W}xg6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$! $\mathbb{W}e7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}f8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b2$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ fxg6
26...bx c 27. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ±

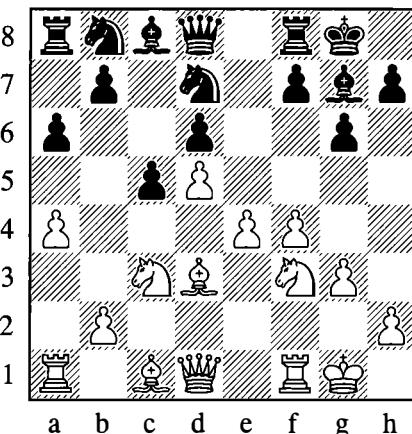


27. $\mathbb{W}xg6$ † $\mathbb{W}g7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}e8$ † $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xg7$ †

$\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ † $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ † $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ †
 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $\mathbb{B}xc4$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ † $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}g6$ †
 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ †

Black's king survived the middlegame, but the draw is not yet secure. Therefore he should consider the proposed improvement at move 15.

A22) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



This has been the most popular choice among high-rated players.

13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

White has tried several moves here, but I will concentrate on the two most popular ones: A221) 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$ and A222) 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$.

A221) 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$

This enables Black to develop strong counterplay.

14... $\mathbb{Q}h3$! 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$

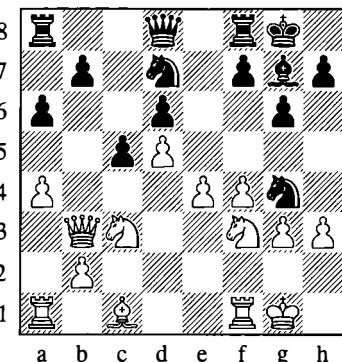
Black can ignore the hanging b-pawn and focus on the weaknesses created by the g2-g3 move.

16. $\mathbb{W}xb7$

This move is consistent at least. Refusing the pawn does not promise much for White:

16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18.h3

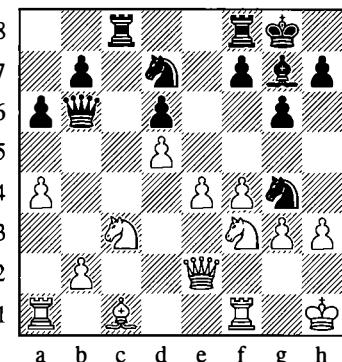
18... $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ c4=



18... $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$

This leads to complications and eventual equality.

Black can also consider the thematic tactical resource: 18...c4? 19. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}b6\uparrow$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xb2\uparrow$) 20... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e2$



21... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$! This exchange is necessary for Black to obtain his counterplay. 22.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 23.c4 $\mathbb{W}b3$ 24.e5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}xc4\leftrightarrow$

19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 20.hxg4 dxc3 21. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 22. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 24.b3 $\mathbb{W}f6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}xd4\uparrow$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ is equal, for example: 27.e5 dxe5 28.d6 $\mathbb{E}ed8$ 29.fxe5 f6 30. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ fxe5 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 32. $\mathbb{E}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$

19... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$

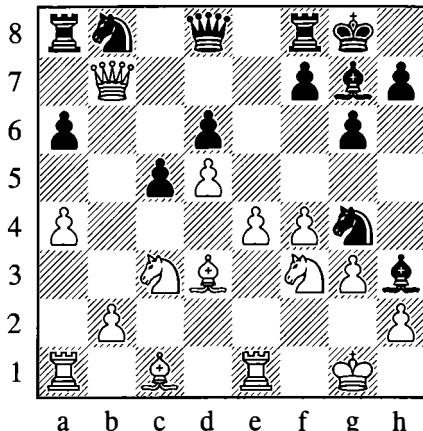
Now the e4-pawn is under fire.

20.e5 dxe5 21.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

Within a few more moves the table will be almost cleared of pieces.

22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ cxd4 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ dxc3 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 25. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1\uparrow$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xe1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{E}xf8$ 29.bxc3 b5 30.axb5

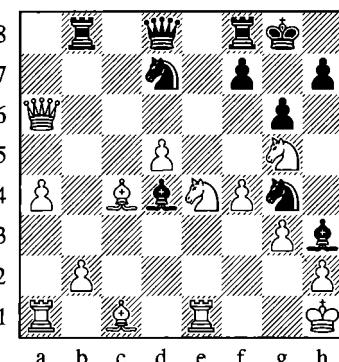
$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Utesch – Claridge, e-mail 2005.



16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17.a5

Immediate central action promises White nothing: 17.e5 dxe5 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ e4 19. $\mathbb{Q}cxе4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ This was Teboul – Marques, e-mail 2004. Here Black has more than one playable move, but the most convincing is:

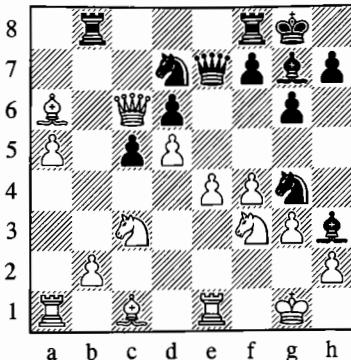
20...c4N 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xa6$ Now at the minimum Black can force a draw with:



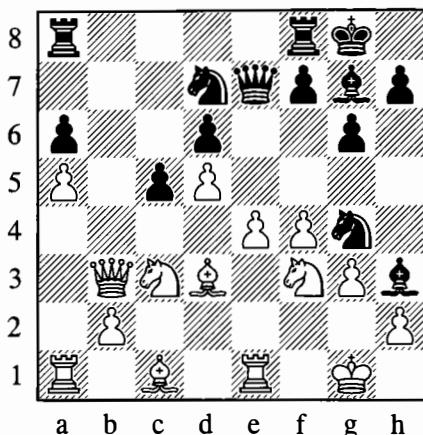
22... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ (22... $\mathbb{E}e8$? is an attempt to keep the game going.) 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\uparrow$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\uparrow=$

17... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$

18.♕xa6? is too greedy, and after 18...♝ab8 the white queen is in trouble: 19.♛c6N (After 19.♛c7? ♖de5! White had to resign in Garcia Martinez – Pigusov, Moscow 1987.)



19...♝b4! Preparing a beautiful trap. The key line is 20.♚f1 ♖b8 21.♛a8 ♕xf1 22.♜xf1 and now 22...♝b7! followed by ...♝a7 snaring the queen.



18...c4! 19.♕xc4

19.♛xc4? ♜fc8 20.♛a2 ♖de5--+

19...♝c5 20.♛c2 ♛a7

An interesting alternative is:

20...♜fc8!N 21.♚f1 ♛a7

21...♕xf1? 22.♕xf1 ♜ab8±

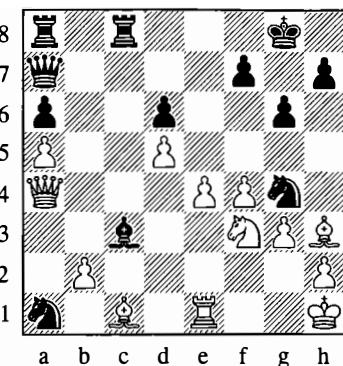
22.♕xh3 ♖b3† 23.♔h1 ♖xa1 24.♛a4

24.♛b1 ♖f2† 25.♔g2 ♖xh3 26.♔e3 ♛d7

27.♛xa1 ♛g4→

24...♝xc3

24...♝f2†? 25.♔g2 ♖xh3 26.♔e3±



25.bxc3 ♖f2† 26.♔g2 ♖d3 27.♔f1 ♜xc3
28.♕d2 ♜c2 29.♛xa1 ♛e3!?

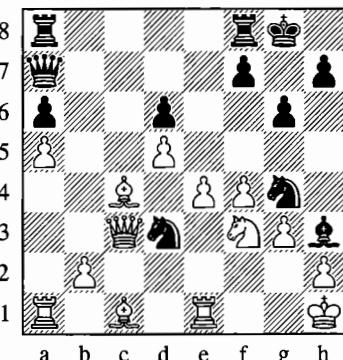
29...♜b8 30.♛d1 ♜xd2† 31.♔xd2 ♛e3
32.♕f3 ♜b2† 33.♔h1 ♛xe4 34.♔g2 ♖f2†
35.♜xf2 ♜xf2=

30.♛d1 ♛xe4 31.♔g1 ♜a2 32.♔g2 ♜b8

Black has some initiative; the pair of rooks on the second rank will make a fine sight indeed, after the second one arrives on b2.

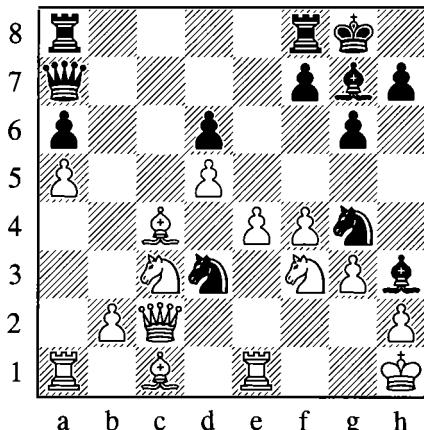
21.♔h1 ♖d3

On this occasion it is best not to give away the g7-bishop: 21...♝xc3 22.♛xc3 ♖d3! (22...♝xe4 23.♛d4±) A beautiful idea, but White has an equally clever defence:



23.♔e3! ♖xe3 24.♛xd3 ♖xc4 25.♛xc4 ♛f2

26.♔h4 ♛g4 27.♔f1 ♛xb2±



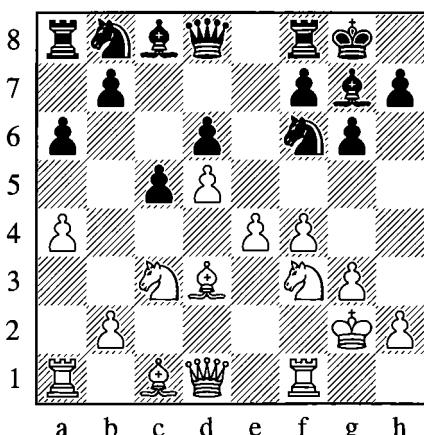
22. $\mathbb{Q}xd3 \mathbb{Q}f2\uparrow$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g1 \mathbb{Q}xd3\uparrow$ 24. $\mathbb{E}e3 \mathbb{Q}xc1$
25. $\mathbb{W}xc1 \mathbb{E}ab8$

Black has good compensation, as demonstrated in the following game.

26. $\mathbb{E}a2 \mathbb{Q}xc3$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xc3 \mathbb{E}fc8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}d4 \mathbb{E}c1\uparrow$
29. $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{E}f1\uparrow$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{W}d7\rightarrow$

Dufour – Weegenaar, e-mail 2003.

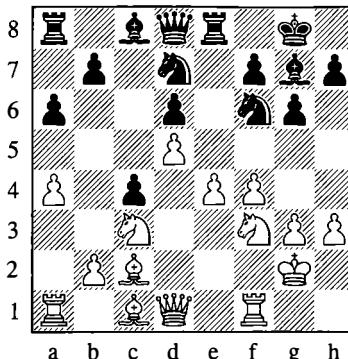
A222) 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$



14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

Black should take the opportunity to develop and exchange his light-squared bishop before h2-h3 comes.

Less logical is: 14... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{h}3!$ c4 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$



17. $\mathbb{Q}e3!N$ (17. $f5$ allows Black to obtain good counterplay: 17... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5?!$ $h6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 20. $\mathbb{fxg6}\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ Grigorian – Kononenko, Internet 2009, and now 21... $\mathbb{Q}fxe4!N$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ gives Black a big advantage.) 17... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 19. $g4$ $b6\pm$ Black lacks counterplay and his position is generally unimpressive.

15. $\mathbb{h}3 \mathbb{Q}xf3\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf3 \mathbb{Q}bd7$

This is the type of position Black aims for when playing 9... $\mathbb{W}h4\uparrow$. It's close to equal, as the chances of White executing a successful e4-e5 break or kingside attack are quite low.

17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Another game continued 17. $a5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{E}ab1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 20. $b4$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $cxb4$ 22. $\mathbb{E}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xc8$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xb4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 25. $\mathbb{E}c4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ and White kept just a modest edge in Braziulis – Betker, e-mail 2008.

17... $\mathbb{W}c7$

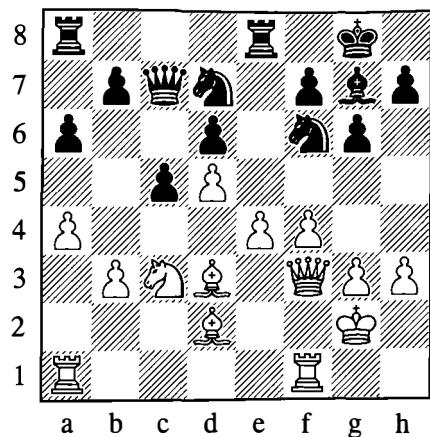
After 17... $\mathbb{E}c8?!$ 18. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}ae1\pm$ White was in control in Akesson – Solomon, Budapest 2008.

18. $b3 \mathbb{E}fe8N$

I think the rook should stay in the centre, as opposed to 18... $\mathbb{E}fb8$ as played in T. Paehtz – Goldberg, Glauchau 1987.

Another game saw: 18... $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ (19. $\mathbb{Q}c4N$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 21. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6\pm$)

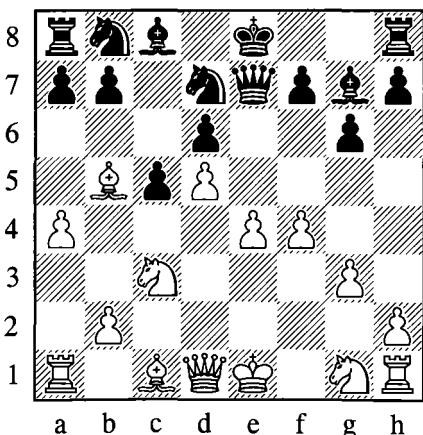
19... $\mathbb{E}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 21. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 22. $\mathbb{E}c1$
 $\mathbb{W}b8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}ce1$ $\mathbb{W}c7\pm$ Tate – Gantar, Pardubice
2012.



19. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 20. $a5$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 21. $g4$ $h6\pm$

Black has arranged his pieces in as good a way as he can hope for in this line. He is well placed to meet any immediate attacking try from White, but on the other hand it is hard to see how Black can improve his position further. Perhaps his best winning strategy will be to offer a draw and hope the opponent overreaches.

B) 10... $\mathbb{W}e7$

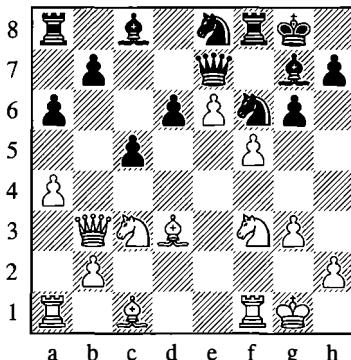


I think this is the better move.

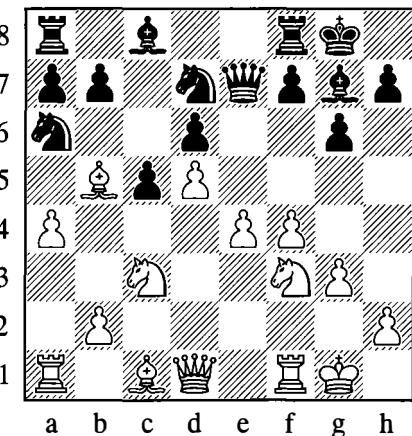
11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0 12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}a6$

This time I have a clear preference for the knight move.

I am less keen on 12...a6, and will say no more about it other than mentioning one game showing a good path for White: 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $dxe5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4\pm$) 16.e6 $fxe6$ 17. $dxe6$ $\mathbb{Q}df6$ 18.f5



18... $gxsf5$ (18... $d5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $gxf5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$) 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{E}e1\pm$ Flude – Shutov, e-mail 2002.



Here White can choose between the sharp
B1) 13.e5 and the more measured B2) 13. $\mathbb{E}e1$.

B1) 13.e5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$!

13...dxe5?! is inadvisable: 14.d6 ♜d8 15.♕d5 e4 16.♕g5 ♜f6N (16...♕d4† 17.♕e3 ♜xe3† 18.♕xe3 ♜f6 19.♕c4→ Van Dijk – Guido, e-mail 2002) 17.♕e7† ♜h8 18.f5 ♜xf5 19.♕xf5 gxf5 20.♕xf5±

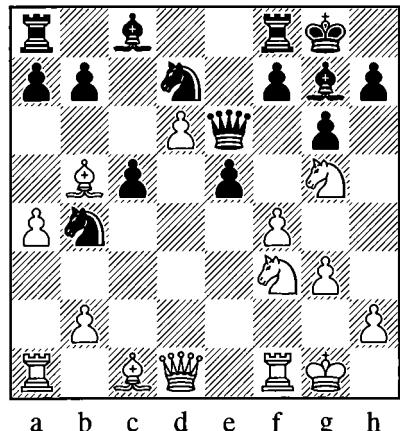
14.♕e4 dxe5

Now is the time to take the pawn.

Avoiding it may lead to trouble: 14...♕b6? 15.♕xd6 ♜6xd5 (15...♕h3 16.♕f2 a6 17.♕f1 ♜xf1 18.♕xf1 ♜6xd5 19.♕d2± Bielik – Gazi, e-mail 2008.) 16.♕d2 ♜g4 17.♕b3 ♜ad8 18.♕c4 (18.♕ad1!N±) 18...♕b6 (18...♕xd6 19.exd6 ♜xd6±) 19.♕xb4 cxb4 20.♕xf7† ♜xf7 21.♕g5 ♜xd6 22.exd6± Bagirov – Malaniuk, Baku 1983.

15.d6 ♜e6 16.♕eg5

This position was reached in Yuneev – Goldberg, Dresden 1981. Here I found a useful improvement for Black:



16...♜e8!N

In the game Black put the queen on the more exposed f5-square, but soon fell into trouble and lost quickly.

17.♕xe5

After 17.♕xe5? a6 18.♕c4 ♜xe5 19.fxe5 ♜xe5 20.♕e1 ♜bc6 21.♕f4 ♜d8 22.♕d5 ♜f5

White has fair compensation for a pawn, but no obvious advantage that I can see.

17...a6 18.♕c4 ♜b6!

18...爵xe5? does not work: 19.爵xe5 ♜xe5 20.爵xf7 ♜d4† 21.爵xd4 ♜xd4† 22.爵g2 ♜f5 23.爵h6† ♜g7 24.爵xf5† gxf5 25.爵f4±

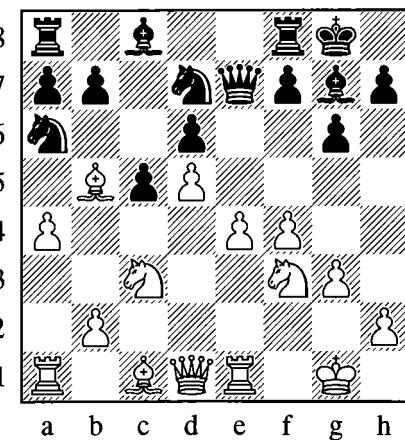
19.爵xf7† ♜xf7 20.爵xf7 ♜xf7

The game is finely balanced, and it is by no means clear whether White's mighty central pawns or Black's slight material advantage (two strong minor pieces versus rook and pawn) will ultimately prove more significant. Here is an illustrative line:

21.♕e3 ♜h3 22.♕f2 ♜d5 23.爵xd5† ♜6xd5
24.爵xc5 ♜d3 25.爵d2 ♜xc5 26.爵xd5 ♜d7?

The endgame is not worse for Black.

B2) 13.♕e1



13...爵b4

The knight settles on a good outpost.

14.爵f1

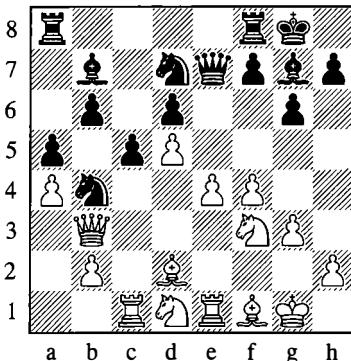
White uses his bishop to shore up the weakened light squares on the kingside. Now Black must decide what to do with his own light-squared bishop.

14...b6

White has tried several different moves here, but there is no clear front-runner. Since Black's general scheme of development is unlikely to vary a great deal, I will just mention a few examples to illustrate the most important ideas.

15.♕e3

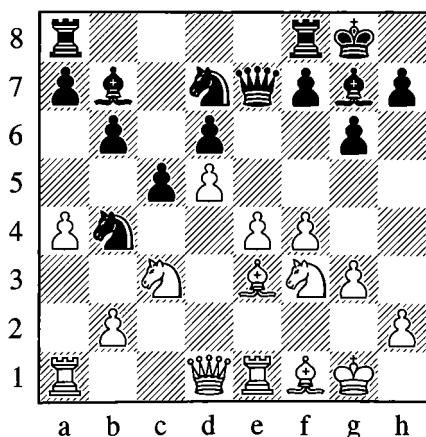
15.♗b3 a6 16.♗d2 ♕b7 17.♗d1 a5 18.♗c1



18...♗f6!N Preparing to move the light-squared bishop to a better place. (18...♗fe8 19.♗f2 ♕a6 20.♗xa6 ♗xa6 21.♗c3± Cutillas Ripoll – Kovernikov, e-mail 2004.) 19.♗f2 ♘ad8 20.♗b5 ♕c8=

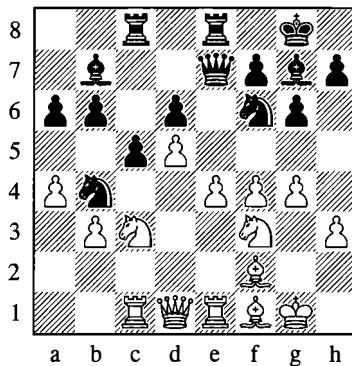
15...♗b7

The bishop will not want to spend the rest of its days on this square, but for the time being it fulfills an important defensive role in discouraging e4-e5.

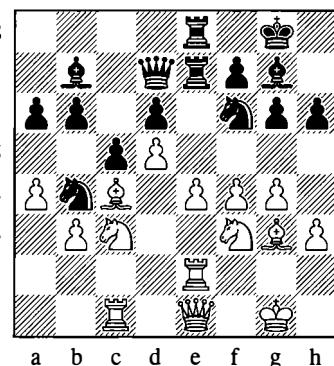


16.♗f2

Another game continued: 16.♗c1 a6 17.♗f2 ♗ac8 18.b3 ♗f6 19.h3 ♗fe8 20.g4 White should always consider this move carefully. It does not cause any immediate problems, but there may come a time when ...h5 becomes troublesome.



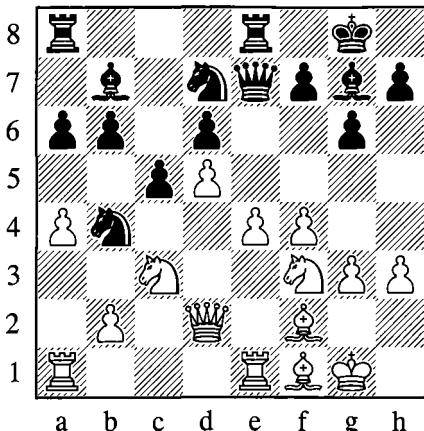
20...h6 21.♗c4 ♗d7 22.♗g3 ♗e7 23.♗e2 ♗ce8
24.♗e1



This position occurred in D. Gurevich – Nun, Eksjo 1982, and now was just the right time for 24...h5!N+, based on the fact that 25.g5? is met by the crushing 25...♗fxd5!.

16...♗fe8 17.h3 a6 18.♗d2

We have been following the game Tanggaard – May, corr. 1996. So far Black has developed most of his pieces to normal places, and here I believe the most precise continuation would have been:



18... $\mathbb{Q}f6N$

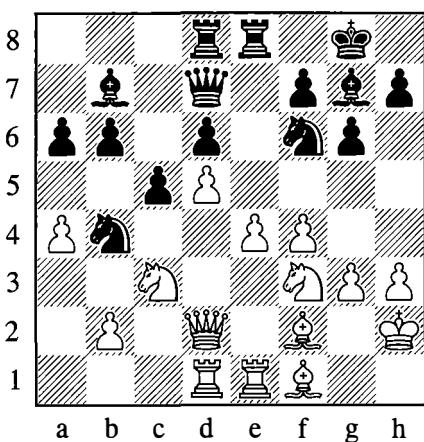
The knight is quite safe here as White will not be able to play e4-e5.

19. $\mathbb{Q}ad1 \mathbb{Wd7}$

After this move we have transposed to a game that reached this position via the 9...0–0 move order; the transposition is also noted in the 15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ line in the notes to variation B21 of the next chapter, which can be found on page 70. But please stay on this page for the continuation from the present position.

20. $\mathbb{Q}h2 \mathbb{Qad8}$

Black is doing everything possible to prevent the e4-e5 break. White is not really in a position to attack on the kingside, so it remains to be seen how the first player may try to make progress. The one game to have reached this position soon ended in a draw.



21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Trying to overprotect the d5-pawn in preparation for e4-e5, but Black can easily counter this plan.

21... $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Of course White could try searching for another idea, but I do not see any real problems for Black.

23... $\mathbb{Q}c8$

Black might also keep the game going with 23...h5!N 24. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{W}c8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}h6=$ although he is unlikely to get anywhere unless White makes a mistake.

24. $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{Q}b7$

$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

H. Muller – Chetvertakoff, e-mail 2002.

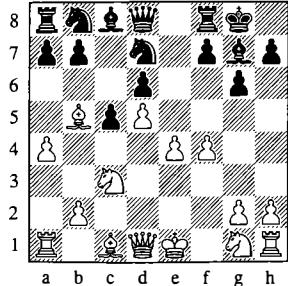
Conclusion

9... $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ is a respectable alternative to the main 9...0–0 line (which we will encounter in the next chapter), especially for players who prefer a more cautious approach against the Flick-Knife Attack. I devoted quite a lot of space to the provocative 10... $\mathbb{W}d8$ move, but found that White was slightly better in quite a lot of the ensuing lines. On the other hand, variation B with 10... $\mathbb{W}e7$ seems more solid, and I failed to find any major problems for Black in the ensuing positions.

Chapter 6

f4 Systems

Flick-Knife Attack – 9.a4 0–0

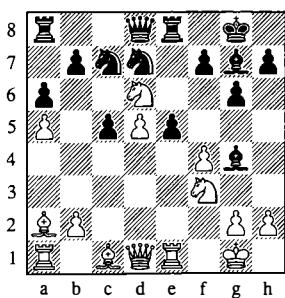


Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$
8... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 9.a4 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 11.0–0

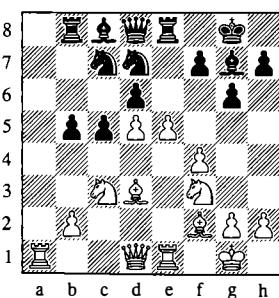
A) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$	63
A1) 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$	63
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B2) 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14.h3	69
B21) 14...b6	70
B22) 14...f5?!	71
B221) 15.exf5	72
B222) 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$	72
B223) 15.e5	73
B224) 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$	76

A1) after 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$



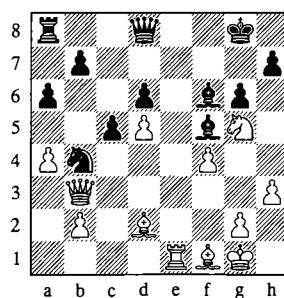
18... $\mathbb{Q}f8!N$

A3) after 17.e5!



17...c4!N

B224) after 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



20...b5!N

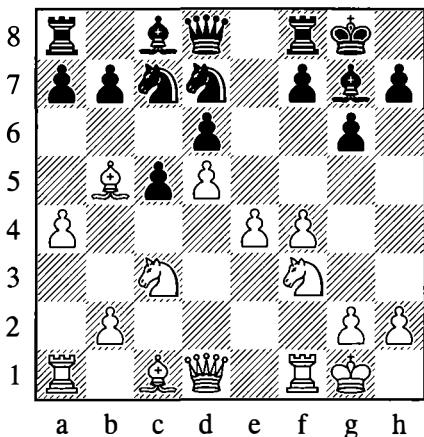
1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 9.a4 0–0

This will be our starting position for the present chapter. Black gets on with his development and prepares for a sharp fight.

10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 11.0–0

Now there are two main lines that Black can consider: A) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ and B) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$.

A) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$



Black nudges the bishop and hopes to use the knight to support a future ...b5 break. White has tried virtually every legal move from this position, but I will focus on the three most important ones: A1) 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$, A2) 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ and A3) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$.

A1) 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ a6

12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$!?

This move looks a bit strange but it seems playable.

13. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 14.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$!?

15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ fails to equalize: 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (16...a6?! 17.e5! dx5 18.f5± Lupini – Purdy, e-mail 1997.) 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}ef6$ (17... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}b4\pm$) 18. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$ Vernay – Spraggett, Metz 2009.

16.e5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 17.a5

This was L. Muller – Vazquez Reyes,

Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010. Here Black should have played:

17... $\mathbb{Q}c8N$

The position remains unclear and roughly equal.

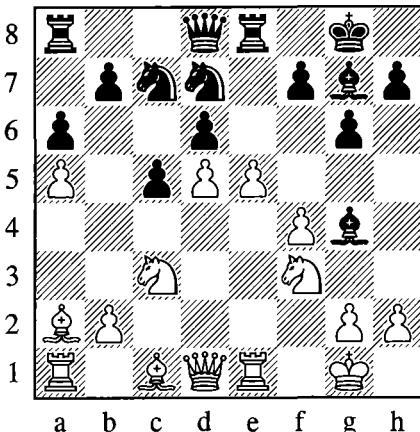
13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14.e5

This is the most popular move.

14.h3 seems pretty harmless, and after 14... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ it is not clear if White can do any more than repeat the position. 17.a5N is one way of continuing the fight, although after 17...b5 18.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6\mp$ Black is not worse.

14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16.a5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black is okay here, and in the following game White overplayed his hand.



17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$!?

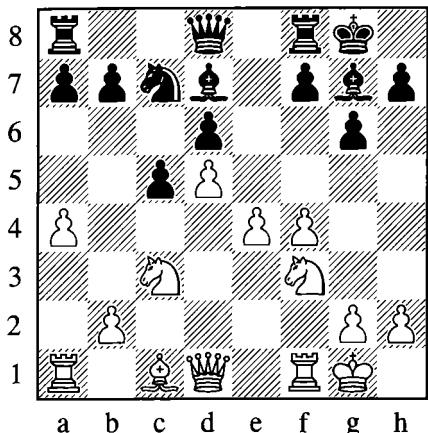
17.e6!N fx6 18.dxe6 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6\pm$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}df8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}h8=$

17...dxe5 18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Now in Mitra – Murshed, Kolkata 1988, Black could have kept some advantage with:

18... $\mathbb{Q}f8!N\mp$

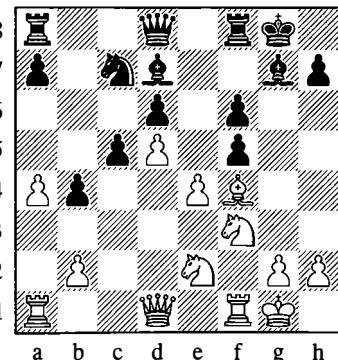
White will struggle to justify his pawn sacrifice.

A2) 12.♕xd7 ♕xd7**13.f5**

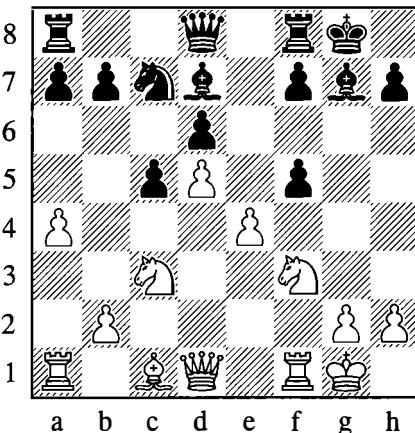
Obviously White did not give up the bishop pair while helping Black's development just for fun – he did it to start an attack. Fortunately Black has plenty of resources, and can decide whether to grab the f-pawn or start a counteroffensive on the other flank.

13...gx5

13...b5 is playable, although after 14.♗g5 f6 15.♗f4 b4 16.♘e2 it seems Black should take the f-pawn after all: 16...gx5?N (16...♗e7 17.♗g3 g5 18.♗e3 a5 Building the great wall, but the g7-bishop may not be so happy to see it. 19.♗d2 ♗c8 20.♗c4 ♗a6 21.♗c1 ♗xc4 22.♗xc4± Nikolov – Pantsulaia, Chalkidiki 2003.)



17.♗xd6 (17.♗g3 fxe4 18.♗xe4 ♗e8 19.♗xd6 ♗xd6 20.♗xd6 ♗xa4 21.♗xa4 ♗xd6∞) 17...fxe4 18.♗xf8 exf3 19.♗xc5 fxe2 20.♗xe2∞ In this murky position both sides have their chances.

**14.♗g5**

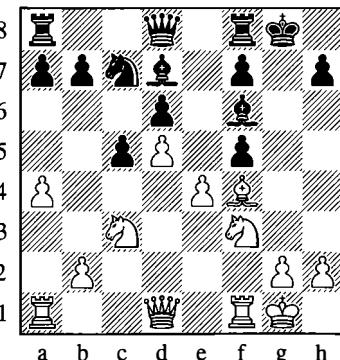
Now we must decide whether or not to block the Benoni bishop.

14...f6

I prefer this move, although the alternative also seems okay:

14...♗f6 15.♗f4

15.♗d2 ♗xg5 16.♗xg5 f6 17.♗e6 (17.♗f3 fxe4 18.♗xe4 ♗f5 19.♗g3 ♗g6 20.♗h4 ♗d7 21.♗a3 ♗ae8∞ Xiu – Liu, Jinan 2005.) 17...♗xe6 18.dxe6 ♗xe6 19.♗ad1 fxe4 20.♗xe4= Blair – Kramer, corr. 1999.



15... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ b5 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$
 Now in Ataman – Erdogan, Ankara 2008,
 Black should have played:
 18... $\mathbb{Q}g8N$ 19.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 20.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}g6\rightleftharpoons$
 With mutual chances.

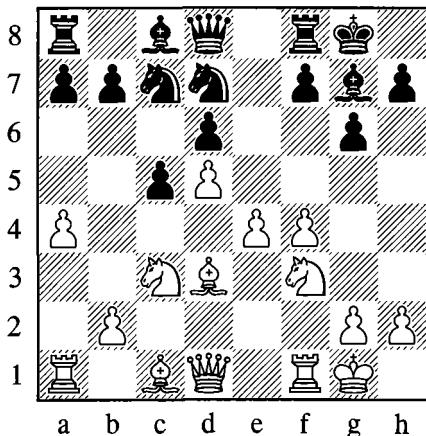
15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

I don't see any major problems for Black here.

17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$

R. Fernandez – H. Fernandez, Santos 1998.
 White has obtained a reasonable level of compensation for the pawn, but not enough to claim the advantage.

A3) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



Finally we come to the most popular move.

12...a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ can be compared with the main line. Apart from that White has tried a whole host of alternatives at one time or another, but I want to focus on the most challenging line.

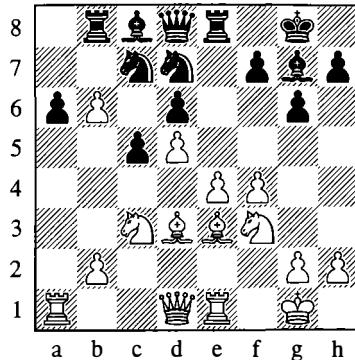
13... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$

Now Black is ready for ...b5.

15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$

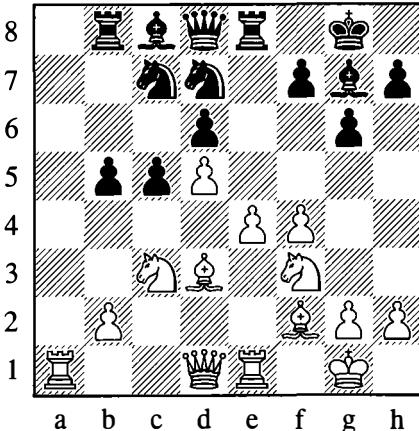
The main move. White wants to exploit the fact that the black queen is surrounded and cannot move.

Less challenging is: 15.a5 b5 16.axb6



16... $\mathbb{Q}b5!N$ A typical move, which allows Black to clear space on the queenside more quickly. (16... $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4=$ was also fine in Lalic – Kotsur, Lucerne 1997.) 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 18.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xb6=$

15...b5 16.axb5 axb5



17.e5!

This move is the most dangerous for Black.

17... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

This is the other idea, hoping to break through with e4-e5.

18...c4

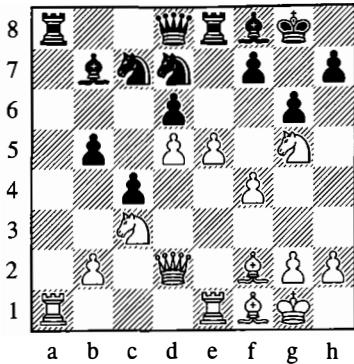
This would be my choice.

18... $b4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ is also playable,

although Black must be willing to accept a repetition of moves. 20. $\mathbb{E}a2$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{Q}f6=$) 20... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{W}d7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d2 \mathbb{Q}h5=$ Molo – Noronha, e-mail 2005.

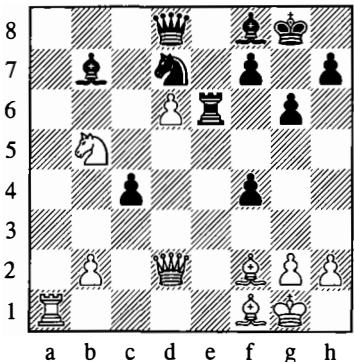
19. $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 20.e5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{Q}f8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d2 \mathbb{E}a8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

Dannehr – Pommrich, e-mail 2008. Now I think Black's best continuation would have been:



23... $\mathbb{E}ax1!N$ 24. $\mathbb{E}ax1$ $dxe5$ 25.d6 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe6 \mathbb{E}xe6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xb5 exf4$

Black has decent chances here, for example:



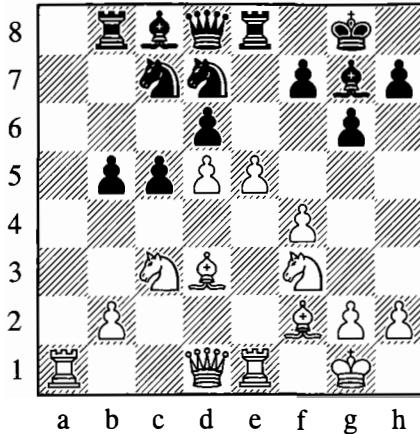
28. $\mathbb{Q}xc4?!$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{E}e5!$

Now White must find some good moves just to hold on.

30.h4!

The only move.

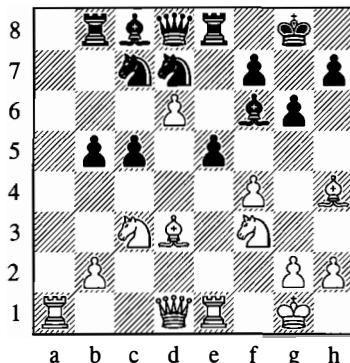
30... $\mathbb{W}xh4$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{Q}xe5$ 33. $\mathbb{E}a7 \mathbb{Q}f3\#$ 34.gxf3 $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{W}xb5\#$ 36. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{W}d7$ 37. $\mathbb{W}d1=$



17...c4!N

I was not satisfied with Black's chances after other moves, so I propose this improvement.

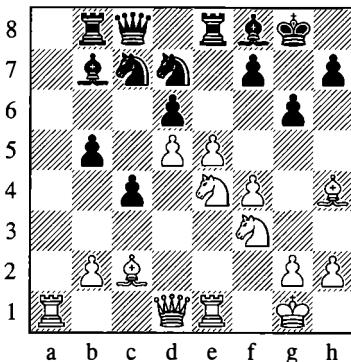
The other main line I analysed is: 17...dxe5 18. $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{Q}f6$ 19.d6



19... $\mathbb{Q}xh4!N$ The machine thinks this is the best chance. (19... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf6 \mathbb{Q}xf6$ 21.fxe5 b4 22. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$ Teboul – Stancu, e-mail 2003.) 20.dxc7 $\mathbb{W}xc7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ c4 22. $\mathbb{Q}f1\pm$ Black has two pawns and a slight initiative for a piece, but it seems to me that White has good chances to consolidate his extra material.

18. $\mathbb{Q}h4$

I also analysed: 18. $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{W}c8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e4 \mathbb{Q}f8!$ This may look a little scary, but don't worry.



21.Qxd6 Qxd6 22.exd6 Qxe1† 23.Qxe1 Qxd5
24.Wd4 f5! The position is about equal.

18...Qf6!

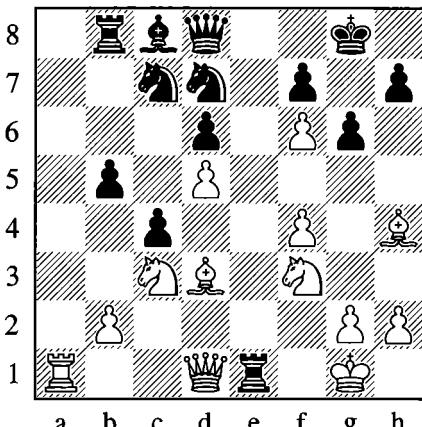
This resource is the key to our survival.

19.exf6

This seems like the most ambitious move.

19.Qxf6 Qxf6 20.exf6 cxd3 21.Wxd3 Qxe1†
22.Qxe1 Qxf6 gives White a modest edge, but I do not believe Black should be in much danger.

19...Qxe1†



20.Wxe1?

This is the most energetic move, but not necessarily the best.

20.Qxe1 cxd3 21.Qd4 Qb7 22.Qc6 Qxc6
23.dxc6 Qc5 24.b4 Qe6?‡

20.Qxe1! looks like the right route to an edge for White: 20...cxd3 21.Qxd3 b4 22.Qe4 Qxd5 23.Wd2±

20...cxd3 21.Qd4

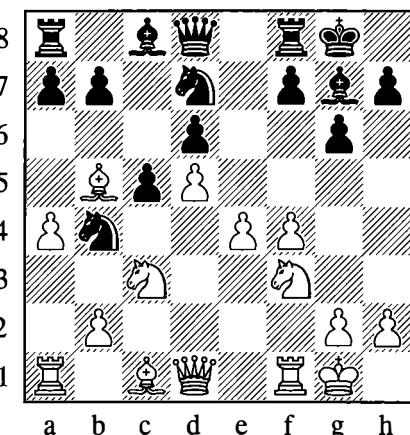
21.We7 Qb7 22.Qa7 Wxe7 23.fxe7 Qb6
24.Qxb5 Qe8?‡

21...Qb7 22.Qc6 Qxc6 23.dxc6 Qc5 24.b4
24.f5 b4?‡

24...Qe6 25.We4 d5 26.Wxd3 Qxf4
27.Wd2 Qfe6

The position is about equal. Although my new 17...c4!N idea seems to improve over existing theory, Black still falls slightly short of equality in a few of the variations noted above.

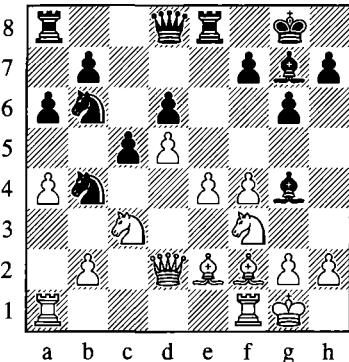
B) 11...Qb4



I think this is the best line for Black. From this position White has tried a wide array of moves, but for instructive purposes I would like to focus on the inaccurate B1) 12.h3?! followed by the main line of B2) 12.Qe1.

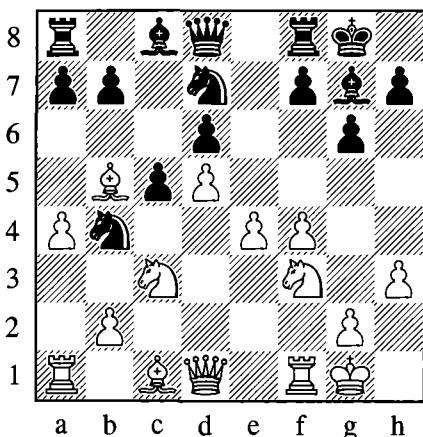
I would like to mention one brief example where Black made excellent use of his knights:

12.♗e3 a6 13.♗c4 ♗b6 14.♗e2 ♘e8 15.♗f2
♗g4 16.♗d2



16...♗xf3! 17.♗xf3 ♗c4 18.♗e2 ♗a5! 19.♗d1
This was Ajrapetjan – Maze, Moscow 2009,
and here Black could have seized the initiative
with 19...♗d4!N intending ...♗f6.

B1) 12.h3?!

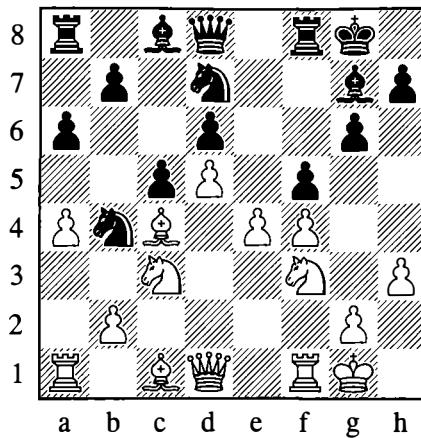


This has been tried by some strong grandmasters, but with ...♗f6 not having been played yet, it may amount to a waste of time.

12...a6 13.♗c4

Thanks to the slowness of White's previous move, Black can now take the opportunity to sharpen the fight.

13...♗f5!



14.♗g5

Of course we should also consider the central breakthrough:

14.e5 dx5 15.d6†

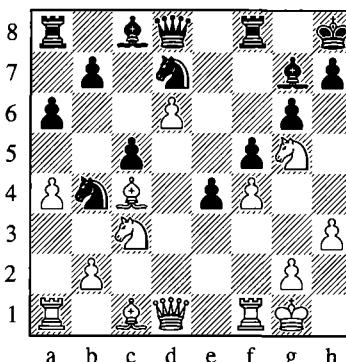
Another idea is 15.♗e3?! h6?! (15...exf4N and 15...e4N both deserve serious consideration.) 16.fxe5 ♗xe5 17.♗xe5 ♗xe5 18.♗xh6 ♘e8 19.♗d2 ♗d6 20.♗ael ♗d7 with balanced play, Gretencord – Lahdenmaeki, e-mail 2008.

15...♗h8 16.♗g5

White is poised to win an exchange, but Black should be able to claim excellent compensation.

16...e4

16...♗b6?! 17.♗f7† ♘xf7 18.♗xf7 ♖f8
19.♗b3∞



17.♗e6

17.♗f7†? is premature due to 17...♘xf7

18.♗xf7 ♗d4† followed by ...♝f8, with a big advantage to Black.

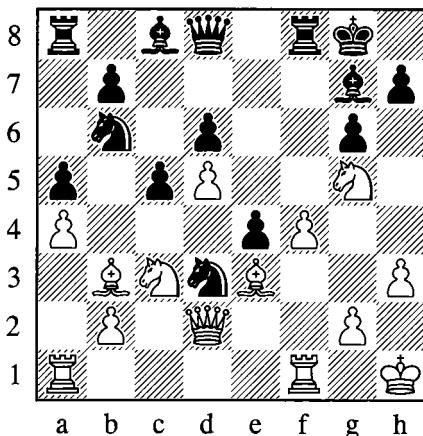
17...♝f6 18.♗xf8 ♜d4† 19.♝xd4 ♗xd4†
20.♔h2 ♗xf8†

14...♝b6 15.♗b3 a5!

It is worth weakening the b5-square in order to maintain the knight's position on b6.

16.♗e3 fxe4 17.♔h1 ♗d3 18.♝d2

Now Black has a few tempting options.



18...♝xc3?N

Black trades off the important dark-squared bishop in order to preserve the knight on d3, which has become even more valuable.

18...♝e8?! led to an eventual victory for Black in Bareev – Topalov, Dortmund 2002, but at this point 19.♗cxe4!N ♘xb2 20.♗ac1 would have turned the tables and given White a promising initiative.

18...c4?N is tempting when you see that 19.♗c2 ♘f5 20.♗gxe4 ♘xd5 21.♗xd5 ♘xe4 22.♗b6 d5 23.♗xa8 ♜xa8 is an excellent exchange sacrifice. Unfortunately White can improve on move 19 by capturing on e4 with either one of his knights, each leading to approximate equality.

Finally 18...♝f5?N deserves attention, based on the fact that 19.♔h6 favours Black.

19.bxc3

19.♝xc3 ♜e7 is better for Black.

19...♜e7 20.♔g4

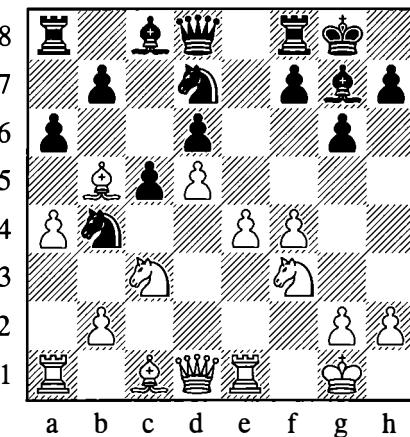
Most other moves will be met by ...h6.

20...♝d7

Black is at least equal, for instance:

21.♗e6 ♜h4†

B2) 12.♗e1 a6



13.♗f1

This is the best retreat square for the bishop.

13.♗c4?! gives Black time to exchange his problem bishop: 13...♝b6! 14.♗f1 (14.♗e2 ♘g4 15.h3 ♘xf3 16.♗xf3 I. Watson – Nunn, Brighton 1980. 16...♝c4N†) 14...♜g4 15.♗e3 ♘xf3 16.gxf3 ♘d7 Black is at least equal, Cori Tello – Padilla, Callao 2007.

13...♝e8 14.h3

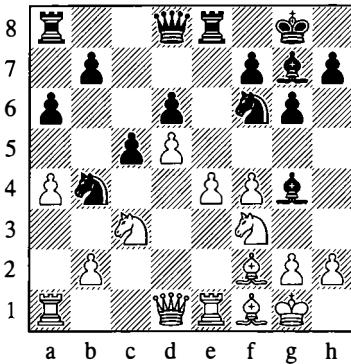
The most popular alternative has been:

14.♗e3 ♘f6 15.♗f2 ♘g4

One top-level game continued: 15...♝h5?!

16.♝d2 ♘g4 17.♗e2 ♘h6 18.♗e3 ♘f6 19.h3

$\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21. a5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ and a draw was agreed in Jakovenko – Gashimov, Astrakhan 2010.



16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

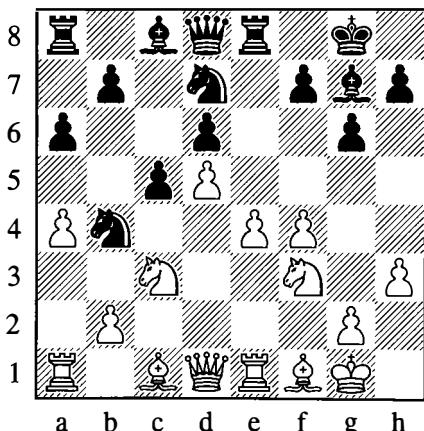
16... $\mathbb{Q}h5$!?? 17. h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$!

19. g4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ was also balanced in Bosschem – Mirzoev, Livigno 2011.

17. h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8=$

Guevara Castillo – G. Mueller, e-mail 2006.

Black was fine in all these games, so we may conclude that White's only chance for an advantage is to prevent the enemy bishop from exchanging itself via the g4-square.



After the text move Black has to make an important decision. Although bringing the knight to b4 was a good achievement, we must make sure it does not end up out of play. I have

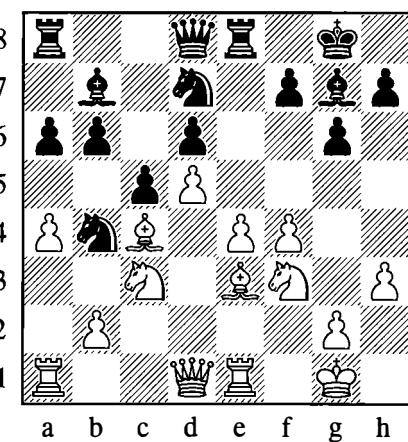
analysed two contrasting approaches, the first being solid and the other more aggressive and risky: B21) 14... $\mathbb{b}6$ and B22) 14... $\mathbb{f}5$!?

B21) 14... $\mathbb{b}6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ is another decent option, which is directed against the manoeuvre of the enemy bishop to h4. Here is a good example: 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 17. g3 (or 17. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ Sundararajan – Satyapragyan, Negombo 2003, 18... $\mathbb{B}a7$!?) 17... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ This was the game H. Muller – Chetvertakoff, e-mail 2002, and we encountered the same position at the end of the previous chapter. Turn back to page 61 for the continuation from here.

16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ was equal in Galvn – Fages, Internet 2009.



16... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

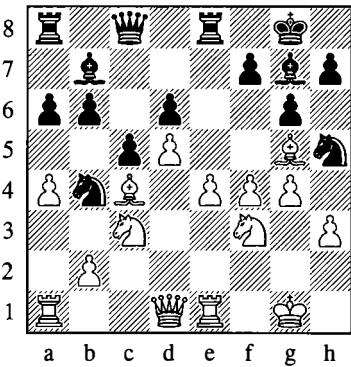
I think Black should improve his position on the kingside and in the centre, rather than the queenside.

In the following game he went for a different plan but failed to equalize: 16... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ † (19... $\mathbb{B}b5$ 20. $\mathbb{axb}5$ $\mathbb{axb}5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$

23.♗b1 ♗g7 24.f5 ♖c8 25.fxg6 hxg6±
20.♕xd4 cxd4 21.♕a2± Moskalenko – Janev,
Alicante 2000.

17.♔f2 ♖h5

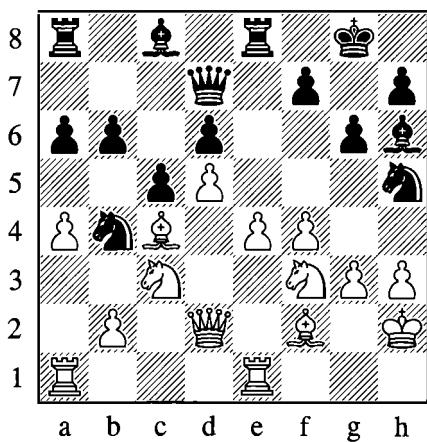
17...♔h6?N is an interesting alternative:
18.♕g3 ♖h5 19.♔h4 ♕c8 20.♔g5 ♔g7 21.g4



21...♗f6? Black has decent counter-chances.
(But note that 21...f6? does not work due to
to 22.gxh5 ♕xh3 23.♔h4 g5 24.♗f2! gxh4
25.♗g1 ♘h8 26.f5! followed by ♘f1 trapping
the black queen.)

18.♕d2 ♔h6 19.g3 ♕d7 20.♗h2 ♕c8

We have reached a similar situation to that at the end of the previous chapter. White has more space, but Black has no weaknesses and is well placed to meet any show of aggression. In the one practical example from this position, White lost his way and fell into difficulties.



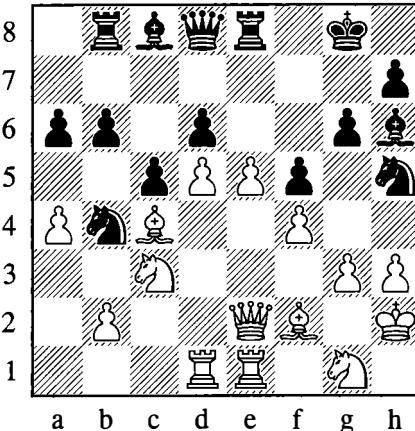
21.♗g1?!

White should have preferred 21.♘f1N ♖b7 when the position resembles the end of the previous chapter.

21...♗b8 22.♕e2 ♕d8 23.♗ad1 f5?!

Black finds an interesting way to exploit the unfortunate position of the knight on g1. Quieter moves are also fine of course.

24.e5



24...♘xf4!

The point behind the previous move.

25.gxf4 ♘xf4† 26.♗g3 ♘xg3† 27.♗xg3 dx5 28.d6† ♘g7 29.♗f3?

29.♗d5N would have kept the game unclear.

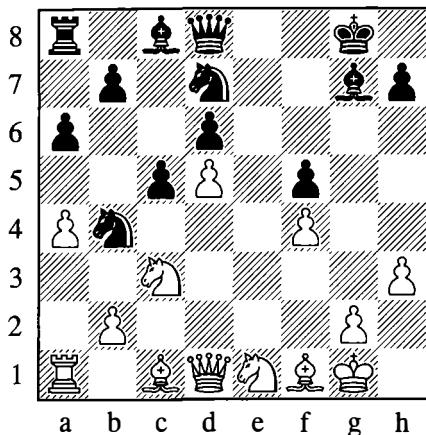
29...e4†

Lautier – Nun, Dortmund 1989.

B22) 14...f5?!

This is the more aggressive line. Black opens the game and trusts in his dynamic potential. I examined four main moves from this position: B221) 15.exf5, B222) 15.♗d2!!, B223) 15.e5, and B224) 15.♕b3.

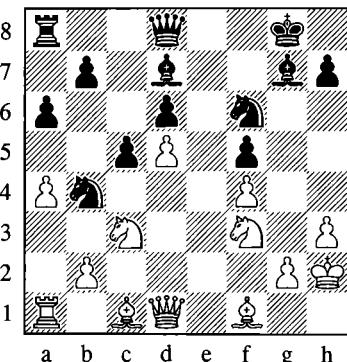
15.♗g5 is not dangerous, as after 15...♗f8 the e6-square is well protected.

B221) 15.exf5 ♜xe1 16.♗xe1 gxf5

Almost all White's pieces are on the first rank, and Black should be at least equal from here.

17.♗c2

After 17.♗f3 ♜f6 Black already controls all the important squares in the centre. 18.♔h2 ♜d7!N (18...♝e4 was equal in Starke – Nowak, e-mail 2004, but maybe it is better to develop the pieces before coming forwards.)

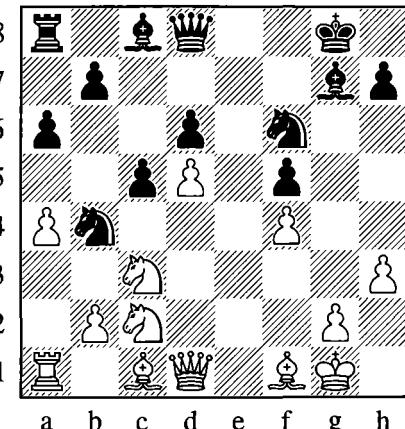


19.♗c4 ♜e7 20.♗e5? (20.a5 is better although after 20...♝e8 Black has a fine position.) 20...♝g4† 21.hxg4 ♜h4† 22.♔g1 dx5†

17...♝f6

17...♜e7 is also reasonable, preventing the bishop from coming to e3. 18.a5 Now

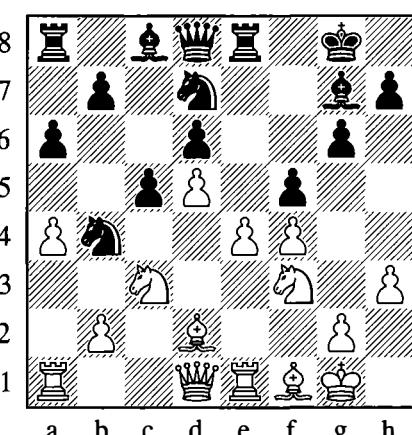
in Backe – Riccio, e-mail 2002, Black could have virtually forced a draw with: 18...♝xc2N 19.♛xc2 ♜d4† 20.♔h2 ♜f6 21.♔d2 ♜g4† 22.♔h1 ♜f2†=

**18.♗e3 ♜e7 19.♗f2 ♜e4**

19...♝d7!N looks quite promising as well.

20.♗xe4 ♜xe4 21.♗xb4 ♜xb4=

Berkvens – Allemand, Zug 2003.

B222) 15.♔d2!?

This move should not really amount to anything more than a quirky move order, but I want to draw your attention to a nasty trap into which a few players have fallen.

15...Qf6?

The correct response has still not occurred in practice: 15...fxe4!N 16.Qxe4 Qf6 17.Qxf6† Qxf6 18.Wb3 Qxel 19.Qxe1 and we have transposed to variation B224 below, which can be found on page 76.

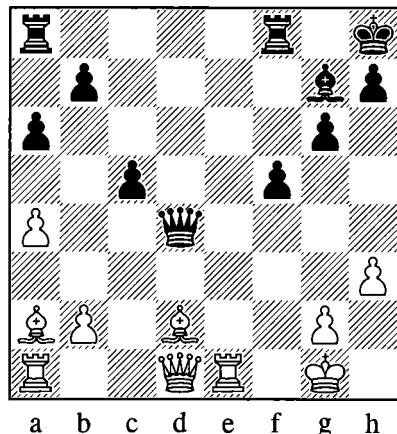
**16.e5! Qfxd5 17.Qxd5 Qxd5 18.Qc4 Qe6
19.Qg5 Qxf4 20.Qxe6 Qxe6 21.exd6**

The pin will cause Black to lose material.

21...Qh8

21...Wxd6? 22.Qc3 is even worse for Black.

22.Qxe6 Wxd6 23.Qf7 Qf8 24.Qa2 Wd4†

**25.Qe3**

25.Qh1 is also good: 25...Wxb2 26.Qd5 Wxa1 27.Wxa1 Qxa1 28.Qxa1 Qg7 29.Qb1 Qad8± S. Saunders – De los Santos Serrano, corr. 2001.

**25...Wxb2 26.Qd5 Wxa1 27.Wxa1 Qxa1
28.Qxa1±**

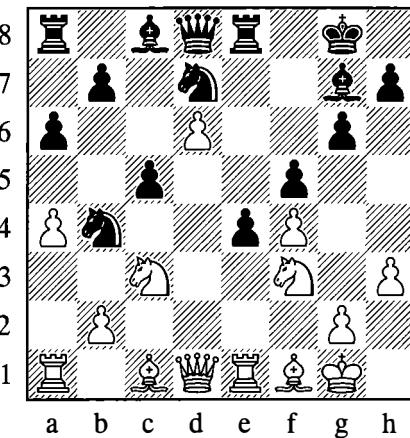
Gokerman – Kusmierenk, e-mail 2009.

B223) 15.e5

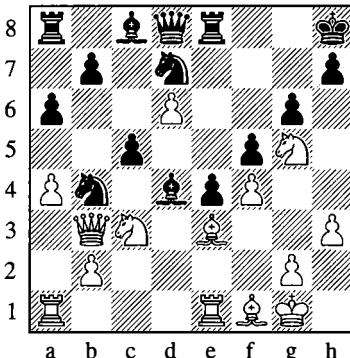
This move is ambitious, but White is risking just as much as Black, and in many lines he will have to sacrifice his knight in order to maintain the initiative.

15...dxe5 16.d6 e4

If you don't want to have to remember a series of forcing lines, you could consider 16...h6? which seems quite playable and prevents White from developing an attack. 17.Qd5 e4 18.Qc7 Qb8 19.Qxe8 Wxe8= Black had about enough compensation for the exchange in Grahlf – Heinz, corr. 1989.

**17.Qg5**

White can also give a check first:
17.Wb3† Qh8 18.Qg5 Qd4† 19.Qe3



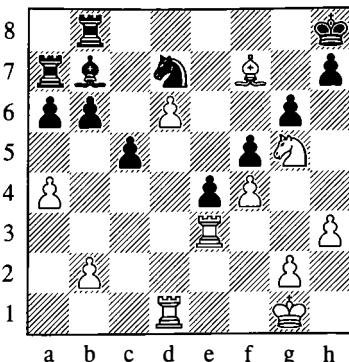
Now there is a split between a) 19...Wf6 and b) 19...Qxe3†!N. I included some interesting analysis of the first move, but the second is more accurate and the one I would recommend.

a) 19...Wf6

This is objectively playable but practically dangerous.

20.♕xd4

20.♕ad1 ♕xe3† 21.♕xe3 b6 22.♗d5 ♗xd5
 23.♗xd5 ♕a7 24.♗c4 ♕b7 25.♗f7 ♕xf7
 26.♗xf7 ♕b8



Now 27.♗g3? ♕c6† occurred in Battaglini – Janev, Sautron 2002. Instead 27.g4N= was correct.

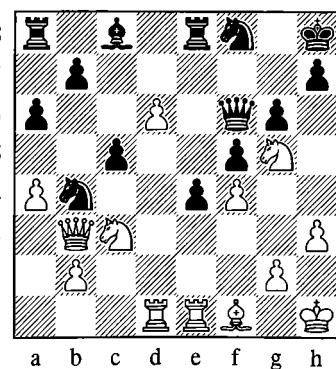
20... ♕xd4† 21.♕h1 ♗f8

21... ♕f6? 22.♗cxe4! fxe4 23.♗xe4 ♕xf4
 24.♗xc5 ♕xe1 25.♗xe1 ♕f6 26.♗f7 ♕xh3
 27.gxh3 ♕xd6 28.♗xb7 ♕b8 29.♗e6 ♕d5†
 30.♗xd5 ♕fxd5 31.a5± Kordts – Stefanov,
 e-mail 2002.

21... ♕g7?! seems to be the safest move, for instance: 22.♕ad1 (22.♗f7† ♕g8=) 22...h6
 23.♗e6 ♕g8 24.♗xc5 ♕xb3 25.♗xb3=

22.♕ad1 ♕f6

Wild complications can occur from here.



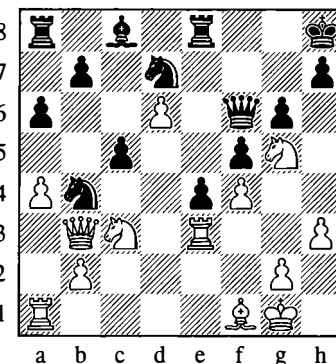
23.♗xe4! fxe4 24.♗cxe4 ♕g7
 24...♗xe4 25.♗xe4 ♕g7 26.♗xc5 a5 27.♗el
 ♕f5 28.♗e7 ♕f6±
 25.♗f7† ♕g8 26.♗h6† ♕h8 27.♗g5 ♕e6
 28.♗gf7† ♕xf7 29.♗xf7† ♕g8 30.♗g5†
 ♕h8 31.d7 ♕e7 32.d8=♕ ♕xd8 33.♗xd8 ♕c6
 34.♗c8 ♕f6

Black has survived and should hold the endgame, but the whole line comes with a health warning!

b) 19... ♕xe3†!N

This is much safer.

20.♗xe3 ♕f6



Now White does not have the same resources involving sacrificing on e4, and he will struggle to justify his material investment. A possible continuation is:

21.♗c4 h6 22.♗e6 ♕b6 23.♗c7?! ♕d4†

Let's return to the main line. Black has a choice of possible continuations, but needs to be careful.

17... ♗f8

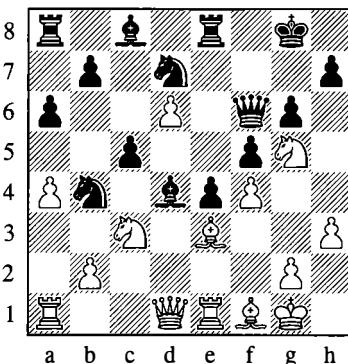
Black wants to regroup, but does he have time? We will find out shortly.

Another playable option is:

17... ♕d4† 18.♗e3 ♕f6

18... ♕xe3†!N 19.♗e3 ♕f6 also looks interesting, for instance: 20.♗b3† ♕h8

- 21.♕ae1 h6 22.♗gxe4 fxe4 23.♗xe4 ♖d4
 24.♗d1 ♖g7 25.♗xc5 ♕xe3 26.♗xe3 ♗xc5
 27.♗xc5 ♗c6†



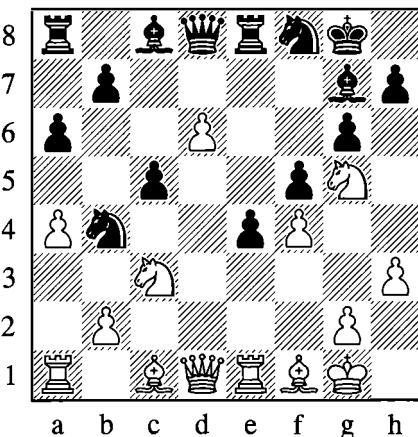
- 19.♗b3† ♗g7 20.♗xd4 ♖xd4† 21.♗h1 ♖f6
 22.♗ad1N

It is necessary for White to improve on 22.♗c4? as played in Klim – Bebel, Barlinek 2008, after which the simple 22...♖xd6!N 23.♗e6† ♕xe6 24.♗xe6 ♗f6 would have brought Black a decisive advantage.

- 22...b6
 22...h6? 23.♗cxe4 fxe4 24.♗xe4 ♖f8
 25.♗xc5±

- 23.♗c4 ♗b7
 23...♗f8? 24.♗f7 ♗d8 25.♗d5! is unpleasant.
 24.♗e6† ♕xe6 25.♗xe6 ♗d8=

Black has enough compensation to maintain the balance.



18.♗c4† ♕e6 19.♗xe6

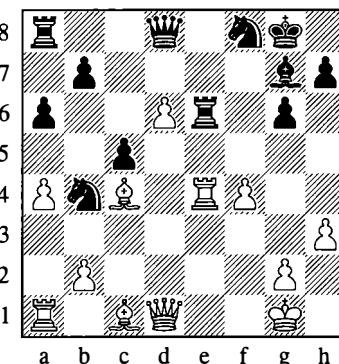
Here too Black has a choice of playable continuations.

19...♗xe6

This is the safer choice, and the one I would recommend.

More complicated is:

- 19...♗xe6 20.♗xe4!N
 20.♗e3?! ♗d3 21.♗xd3 exd3 22.♗xd3 ♗d4
 23.♗xd4 ♖xd6† Rain – Eiben, e-mail 2004.
 20...fxe4 21.♗xe4



21...♗d4†

This is the forcing move, although 21...♗d7 is possible: 22.♗g4 ♗ae8 23.f5 gxf5 24.♗xf5 ♗c2 (24...♗h8? 25.♗xe6 ♕xe6 26.♗xe6 ♗xe6 27.♗h6 ♗xh6 28.♗e1±; 24...♗c6 25.♗e3 b6 26.♗e1 ♖xd6 27.♗xc5 ♖xc5† 28.♗xc5 bxc5 29.♗xe6† ♗xe6 30.♗xe6=) 25.♗xe6 ♗xe6 26.♗xc2 ♗h8=–
 22.♗e3 ♖xd6 23.♗xd4 cxd4 24.♗b3 ♗ae8
 25.♗ae1 ♗f7 26.g4 ♗f6 27.g5† ♗f7 28.♗f3 ♗g7 29.♗xe6 ♕xe6 30.♗xe6 ♗xe6 31.♗xe6 ♗xe6 32.♗xb7† ♗g8=

20.♗xe4 fxe4

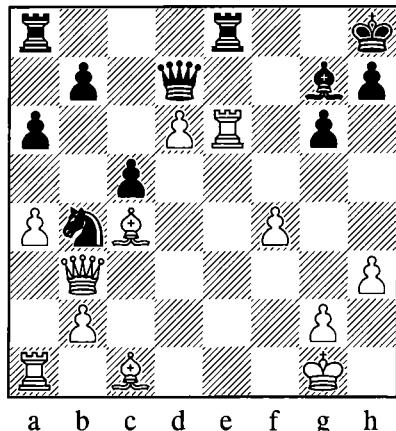
20...♗h8 is not so good: 21.♗xe6 ♕xe6 22.♗g5 ♕xe1† 23.♗xe1 ♖d7 24.♗e6! ♖xe6 25.♗xe6±

21.♗xe4 ♖d7 22.♗b3

22.♗e2 ♖xd6=

22...Qh8 23.Qxe6

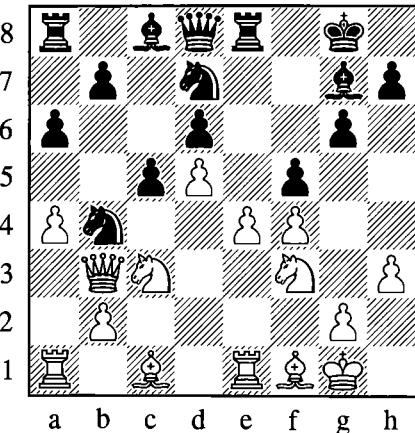
Now in Kordts – Markus, e-mail 1998, Black's simplest continuation would have been:



23...Rxe6N 24.Qxe6 Rxd6 25.Qe3 Rd8

Black has a perfectly playable position. (By the way, in case you were wondering, 25...Re8 was not winning on account of 26.Qd1.)

B224) 15.Wb3

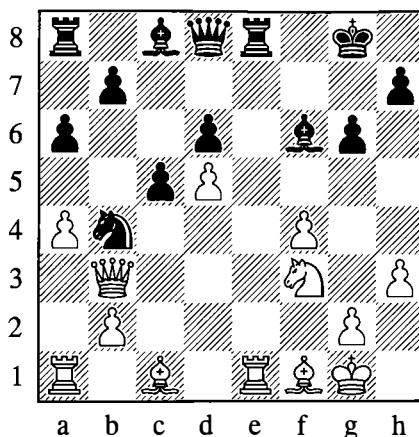


This has been White's most popular choice, and is less risky than the previous line.

15...fxe4 16.Qxe4 Qf6

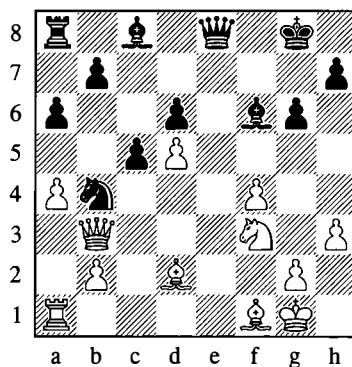
Black has tried a few other options here, but I see no reason to deviate from the main line.

17.Qxf6† Qxf6



18.Qd2

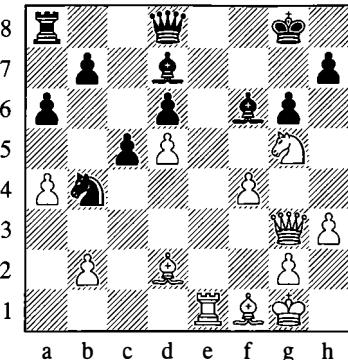
Exchanging rooks is slightly inaccurate, for reasons that will soon become obvious:
18.Rxe8† Rx e8 19.Qd2



19...We4! The queen wastes no time taking centre stage. 20.Qc1 (20.Qe1 Wc2) 20...Qd7
21.Qc4 We8 22.Qg5?! (22.Qxb4N Qxa4
23.Qd3 cxb4 24.Qxb4 Qb5 25.Qd2 Qxf1
26.Qxf1 b5=) 22...Qxa4† 23.Qg3 Qd7
24.Qc3? Qxd5† Luukkonen – Herraiz Hidalgo, Madrid 2011.

18...Rxe1 19.Qxe1 Qf5

Another game continued 19...Qd7 20.Qg5 Wa5 21.Qg3 Qd8, and here the critical continuation seems to be:



22.♕e6!N (22.♗b3=?; 22.♕xb4 was agreed drawn in Mascarenhas – Schoen, e-mail 2003.) 22...♕xe6 23.dxe6 d5 24.♕xb4 cxb4 25.♗f2 ♗d6 Black faces a long defence with little chance of achieving more than a draw.

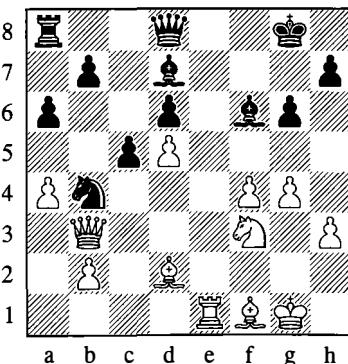
20.♕g5

Another obvious move to consider is:

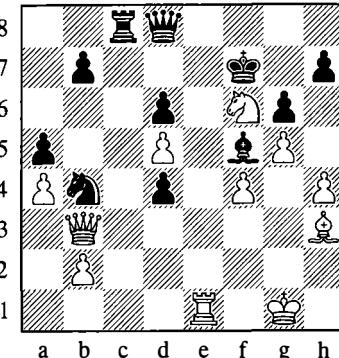
20.g4 ♘d7

20...♗c2? allows White to obtain some advantage with precise play: 21.♗a3 a5 (21...♗d7 22.a5 ♘e8 23.♕xb4 cxb4 24.♗xb4 ♘exel 25.♗xe1 ♘b1±) 22.♗e3 ♘xa4 (22...♗h8 23.♗e6 ♗f8 24.♗d7 ♘d8 25.♗c7 ♘xa4 26.♗g5 ♘xg5 27.♗xg5 ♘e8 28.♗e6±) 23.♗e6† ♘h8 24.♗c3 ♘xc3 25.bxc3 ♗f8 26.♗g5 (26.cxb4?? ♘e8–+) 26...♗e8 27.♗f7 ♗xf7 28.♗xf7† ♘g8 29.♗xe8† ♘xe8 30.♗xd6 ♘xd5 31.♗xe8±

After the text move the position can be compared with the previous note. Here I like Black's chances a little more, as the 'free' g2-g4 move has weakened White's kingside.



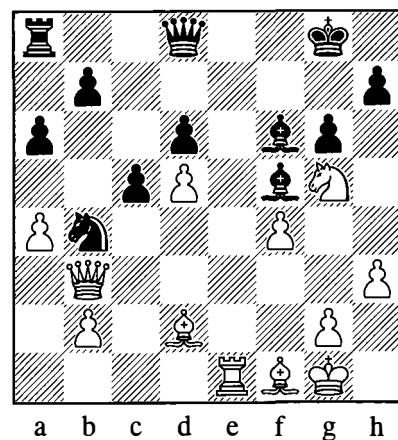
21.♗c3 a5 22.g5 ♘h8 23.♗d2 ♘d4† 23...♗f5!N 24.♗xh8 ♗xh8 25.♗e4 ♘xe4 26.♗xe4 ♗f8= 24.♗xd4 cxd4 25.♗e4 ♘c8 26.♗f6† ♘f7 27.h4 ♘f5 28.♗h3



28...d3!

Forcing a draw.

29.♗xf5 ♗b6† 30.♗h1 ♗f2 31.♗xc8 ♗xe1† ½–½ Trembecki – Rogos, e-mail 2008.

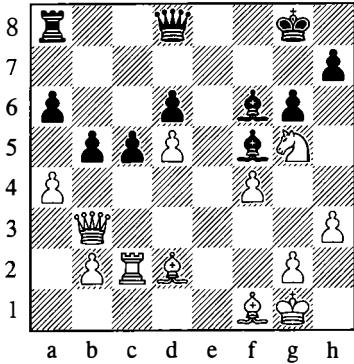


20...b5!N

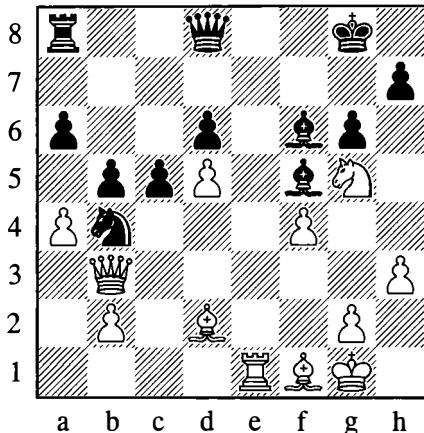
I was happy to find this improvement, which has the important aim of clearing some space for the black rook on the queenside.

20...♗c2? 21.♗c4 ♘xa4 22.♕xb4 cxb4 23.♗xb4 ♘b5 24.♕xb5 ♗b6† 25.♗h2 axb5 occurred in Stefansson – Lie, Aarhus 2003, and here 26.♗e6N± would have been unpleasant.

20... $\mathbb{Q}c2!$? should be enough to hang on although Black will need to play accurately to prove it: 21. $\mathbb{B}c1$ b5 22. $\mathbb{B}xc2$

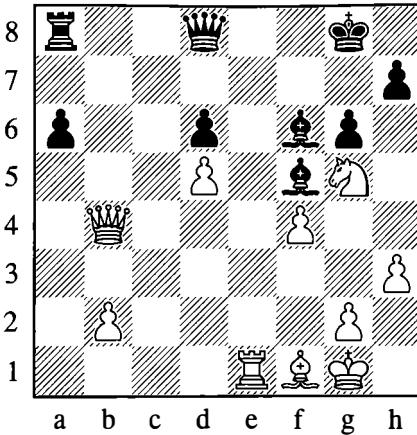


22...c4!N (22... $\mathbb{Q}d4\#?$ 23. $\mathbb{B}h2$ c4 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$
 $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xc2$ bxc4 26. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 27. $\mathbb{W}c6\pm$
 Bennewitz – Boos, e-mail 2008.) 23. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$
 24.fxg5 (24. $\mathbb{B}xc4$ bxc4 25.fxg5 $\mathbb{W}e8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}d4$
 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ cxd3 28. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xd3$
 $\mathbb{W}xg5=)$ 24... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 25. $\mathbb{W}e6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b6\#$
 27. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{E}d8$ 28. $\mathbb{W}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e8=$



21. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{B}xa4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xa4$ $\mathbb{C}xb4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xb4$

Mission accomplished. At the price of a pawn Black has opened two queenside files and obtained the advantage of the bishop pair.



23...a5

23... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 24. $\mathbb{W}a4$ a5 25. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{B}c8$ also looks fine.

24. $\mathbb{W}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xc8\#$ $\mathbb{B}xc8$
 27.b3 $\mathbb{B}c3$ 28. $\mathbb{B}b1$ h6#

The endgame holds no danger for Black.

Conclusion

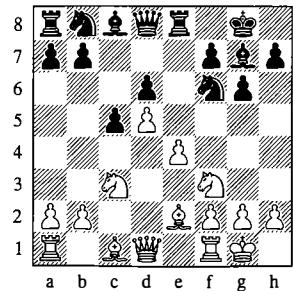
Although 11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ seems playable, the 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ line is the one I would recommend. In variation B21 we saw Black playing solidly with ...b6 and ... $\mathbb{B}b7$, which seems perfectly okay. Nevertheless it was in line B22 that the real highlights occurred, and according to my analysis Black has good chances in the resulting complications.

Overall I would say the Flick-Knife Attack is one of the most difficult variations for either side to play, as there are lots of playable deviations and it is hard to be prepared everywhere. Still, I don't think Black should be afraid to dive headfirst into the flames.



e4 Systems

Classical Variation with 9...♝e8



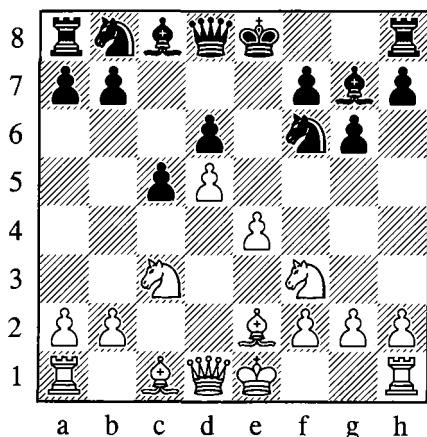
Variation Index

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♜c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♜f3

7...♝g7 8.♜e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♜e8

A) 10.♛c2	80
B) 10.♜d2	82
B1) 10...♜a6 11.f3 ♜c7 12.a4 ♜d7	82
B11) 13.♜c4	84
B12) 13.♝h1	85
B2) 10...♜bd7	87
B21) 11.f4	87
B22) 11.♛c2	89
B23) 11.a4	90
B231) 11...♜e5	91
B232) 11...a6	93
B2321) 12.f4	93
B23211) 12...♝b8	94
B23212) 12...c4	95
B2322) 12.♛c2	96
B23221) 12...♝b8	96
B23222) 12...♜e5	98

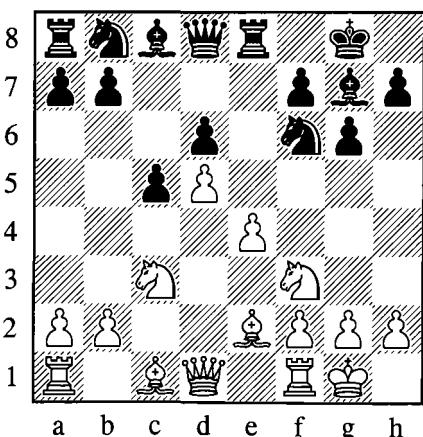
1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5
d6 6.e4 g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



This classical set-up has been a main line for many years, although nowadays it is not the most popular, as many players prefer one of the more aggressive modern lines.

8...0-0 9.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e8$

This is by far the most popular move, although we will also discuss 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ in the next chapter.



From this, the starting position for the present chapter, White has two logical ways to deal with the threat to the e4-pawn: **A) 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ and B) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$.**

A) 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

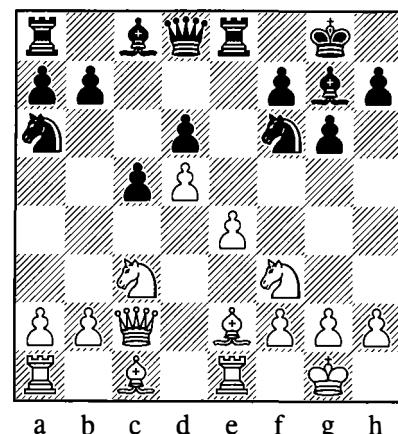
This is a relatively rare choice, and Black gets a good game without too much difficulty.

10... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$

Immediately Black hints at the possibility of harassing the queen.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

11.a3 has been played in quite a few games, but apart from guarding the b4-square, this move is of little use to White. Therefore I will not pay much attention to it here, other than noting that 11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ b5 was quite satisfactory for Black in Vexler – Shestoporov, Omsk 1973.

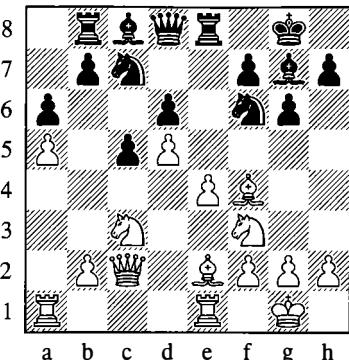


11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$?! sets a small positional trap, as after 12. $\mathbb{W}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 13.a3?! Black can play 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$! 14.gxf3 (14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$? $\mathbb{Q}bx5$!) 14... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ and point to White's fractured kingside. But of course White can easily avoid this with something like 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3N$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.a3 $\mathbb{Q}a6\pm$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ seems quite playable though, for instance: 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$ was good for Black in Materne – Krauhausen, corr. 1969.) 12... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 13.a4 a6 14.a5 This occurred in Vichnar – Pribyl, Mlada

Boleslav 2008, and here the most consistent continuation would have been:

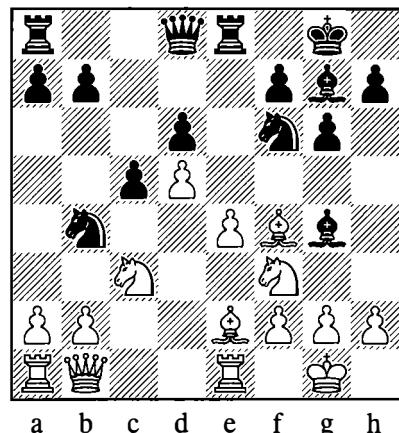


14...b5N 15.axb6 $\mathbb{E}xb6$ Black has good counterplay, for example: 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\uparrow$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2\uparrow$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}xc8=$

12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4!$

On the previous move this idea was dubious, but here it works well.

13. $\mathbb{W}b1$



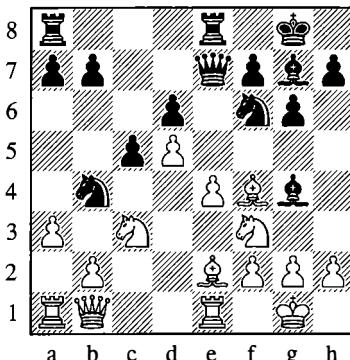
13... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$

Over the past few turns Black's pieces have all been moving forwards! Obviously we should have a concrete idea in mind, otherwise we will just be pushed back.

13... $\mathbb{W}e7$

This move was played in Kulus – Bulgarini Torres, e-mail 2008. Black is determined to dine on the e4-pawn, but the plan is a little too risky.

14.a3!N



14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$

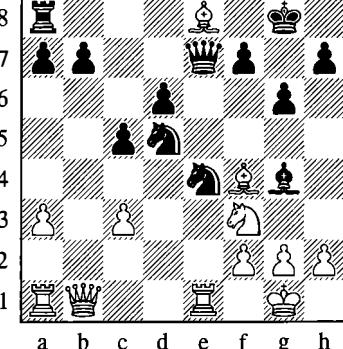
There is no way back for the brave.

Of course 14... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ could be played as a last resort, but after 15.e5 \uparrow White is just better.

15. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$

15.axb4 gives Black a choice of acceptable lines: 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ [17. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4\uparrow$] 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe1$ $\mathbb{W}xe1\uparrow$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{E}e4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{E}xb4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5=$) 16.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb1$ $\mathbb{E}e4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{E}xb4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 24.d6 a6 25.f4 b5=

15... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$



17... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

17... $\mathbb{Q}dxc3?$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{E}xe8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ c4
20. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ d5 21. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xe7$ $\mathbb{E}xe7$
23. $\mathbb{Q}xc3+-$

17... $\mathbb{Q}f5!!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd6!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}a2\pm$

18. $\mathbb{W}d3!$

18.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}g5\uparrow$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}g2\uparrow$
21. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}g1\uparrow$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xf2\uparrow$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e2\uparrow$
24. $\mathbb{E}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xb7\uparrow$
 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}f1\uparrow$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{W}e2\uparrow=$
18... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{E}xe8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}e5$
21. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 22. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23.f3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xe5$
dxe5 25. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ b6±

After all the fireworks Black will have to fight for a draw in the endgame.

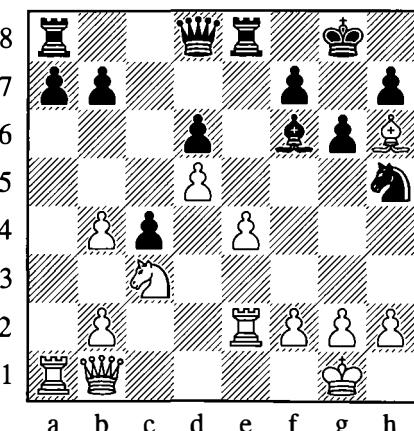
14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c4! can be compared with the main line; here too Black has promising counterplay.

14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ c4!

Black needs to make use of the knight on b4 before it is driven away.

16.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 17.axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xe2$



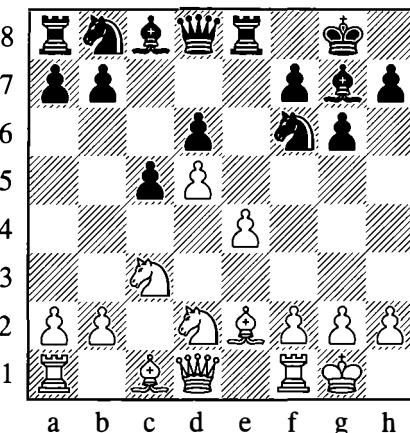
18... $\mathbb{Q}g5N$

This would be my first choice, although 18...g5! also led to interesting play and eventual success for Black in Nemet – Antunac, Yugoslavia 1975.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 20.g3 $\mathbb{Q}f4\mp$

The initiative is with Black.

B) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



Even if you favour the 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ line, it is important to know something about this position as it can also arise through the Knight's Tour Variation, while some of the ensuing lines with f2-f4 can occur via the Four Pawns. From here I will consider two approaches for Black: B1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ and B2) 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$.

B1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

The knight is heading for c7. The variation is solid but lacking in active prospects for Black, so it would not be my first choice.

11.f3

White overprotects the e4-pawn in order to prepare $\mathbb{Q}c4$.

11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$

From here the knight will support the ...b5 break. If White tries to prevent it with a4-a5, then the knight may come forwards to b5 and later to d4.

12.a4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

This modern line has been used by a few top

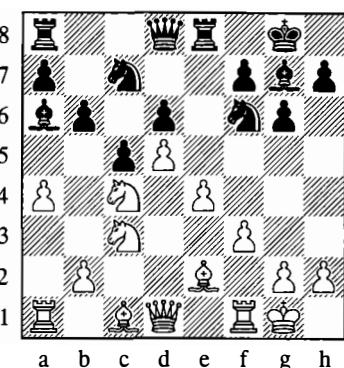
players. I will discuss a couple of other ideas as well:

12... $\mathbb{Q}h5$? With most of the pieces on the back rank it is a lost cause to start an attack so early.
 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ f5 (14... $\mathbb{W}h4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$ Furman – Kirchberg, e-mail 2005.) 15.g4 fxg4 16.fxg4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ Now in Delchev – A. Kovacevic, Zadar 2007, White could have obtained a serious advantage with 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2\text{N}$.

Historically, Black's most popular option has been:

12...b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$

Black wants to exchange the worse of his two bishops for the annoying knight on c4.



14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

14... $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ a6 16.g4 $\mathbb{Q}b8\rightleftarrows$
 Karasev – Stein, Leningrad 1971.

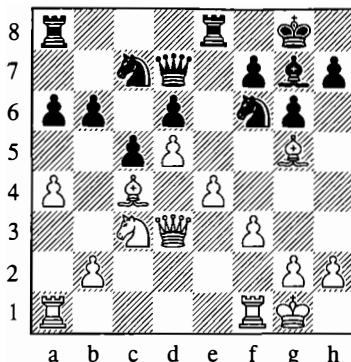
14... $\mathbb{W}d7$

14...h6?! 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ a6 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 19.b4 b5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c4
 21.a5±

This position occurred in several games in the later decades of the last century, but most Benoni players avoid it nowadays. Black has no serious weaknesses, but his position is passive and generally unappealing.

15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ a6 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$

White has two bishops and more space. Black's only real option is to aim for kingside counterplay.



17... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

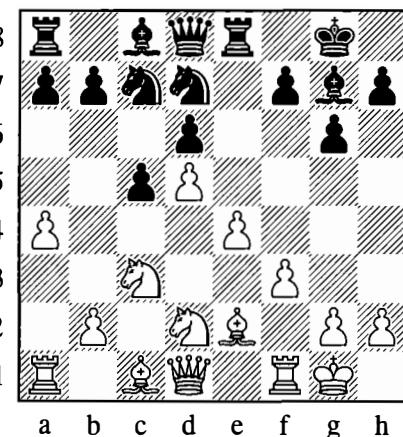
The direct 18.g4?! is also promising:
 18... $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ (Or 19... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ intending b2-b4 with an edge to White, Banet – Chiru, e-mail 2005.)
 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f5?! Evdokimov – Berg, Helsingor 2008. 21.gxf5N gxf5 22.b4±

18...h6 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ g5 20. $\mathbb{Q}fb1$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$

Zilka – Fauland, Austria 2011. Now the right way would have been:

21. $\mathbb{Q}xf4\text{N}$ gxf4 22. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ b5
 24. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf4\pm$

Black has no real compensation.



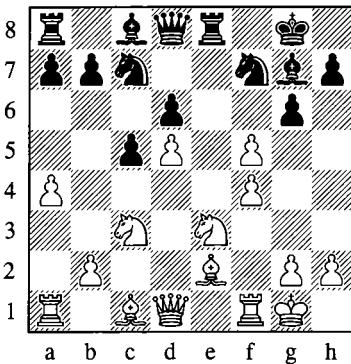
Returning to the main line, White has two main options: coming forward immediately with B1 1) 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and waiting with B12) 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$.

B11) 13.♘c4 ♘e5

Black's previous move prepared this method of challenging the strong knight.

14.♗e3 f5 15.exf5

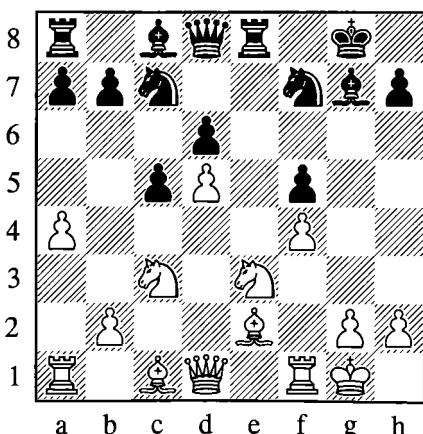
15.f4?! is an inaccurate move order which needlessly gives Black an additional option: 15...♝f7 16.exf5



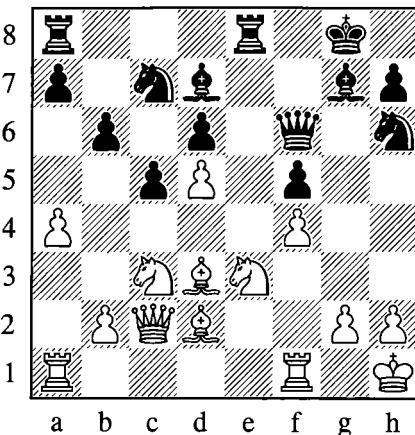
16...♝h6! 17.fxg6 ♘d4 18.gxh7† ♘h8 19.♗h1 ♘xe3 20.♗h5? (20.♗xe3N ♘xe3 21.♗d2 was necessary.) 20...♝h4† Koneru – Wojtaszek, Lausanne 2006.

15...gx f5 16.f4 ♘f7

Both sides have strengths and weaknesses here, but overall White's chances seem to be slightly higher.

**17.♗h1 b6 18.♗d3 ♘h6**

The knight does not sit prettily here, but there was not much choice as the f5-pawn needed to be defended. 18...♝f6 can be met by 19.♗c2 forcing 19...♝h6 when we reach the main line.

19.♗c2 ♘f6 20.♗d2 ♘d7**21.♖f3!**

This rook has the potential to cause a lot of trouble on the third rank.

21...♗h8

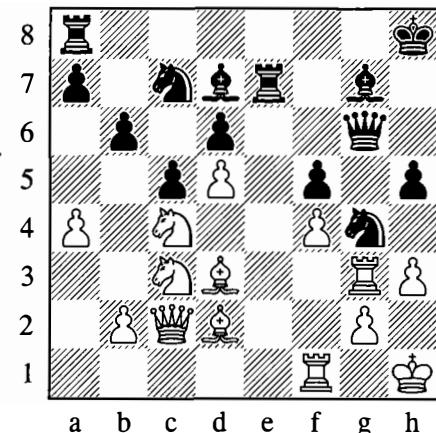
Black can also consider 21...♜e7 22.♜g3 ♜ae8 as played in Koneru – Siebrecht, Differdange 2007, after which 23.♞f1 N± looks like a logical way to build up White's position.

22.♗af1 ♜e7 23.♗h3 ♜f7

Another idea is 23...♜ae8N 24.♗cd1 ♜f8 25.♗c3 ♜xc3 26.♗xc3† ♘g8, when White remains a bit better but Black is certainly in the game.

24.♗c4 ♜g6 25.♗g3 ♘g4 26.h3 h5?!

An understandable attempt to complicate the position, but objectively it is insufficient. 26...♝f6!N± should have been preferred.

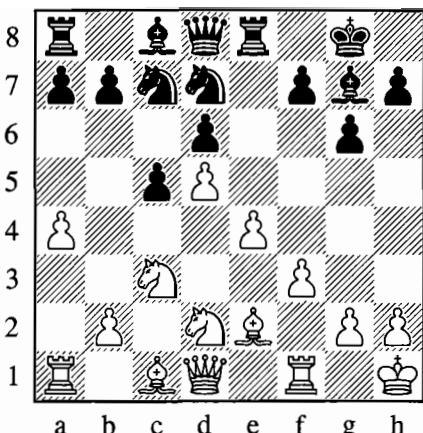
**27.hxg4!N**

27. $\mathbb{Q}e3$?! maintained a slight plus but Black was eventually able to draw in Kramnik – Topalov, Monte Carlo (rapid) 2001.

27...hxg4 28. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

White faces some temporary coordination problems, but eventually his extra piece should tell. A possible continuation is:

28... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$
 31. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 33.b4 g3
 34. $\mathbb{Q}g1+-$

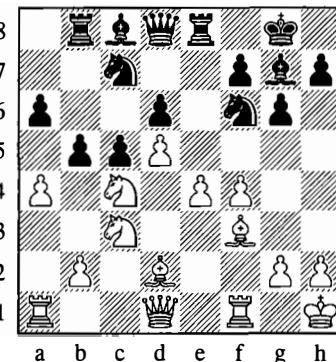
B12) 13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ **13...b6 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$?**

I decided to analyse this somewhat rare move, in order to provide a contrast with the

previous variation with 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$. However, I should not hide that fact that the knight move leads to some advantage for White in this position too:

14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$

15...f5 16.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 17.exf5 gxf5 leads back to variation B11, which favours White as we have already seen.

16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ a6 17.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5**20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6!$**

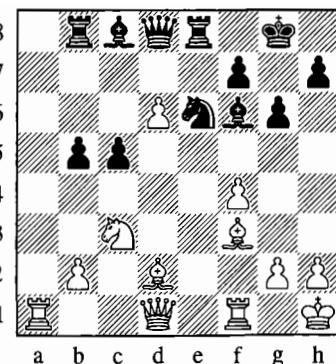
This simple and thematic tactic leads to a fine position for White.

20... $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 21.e5 $\mathbb{W}d8$

21... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 22.d6 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6\pm$ Mulder van Leens Dijkstra – C. Alexander, corr. 1972.

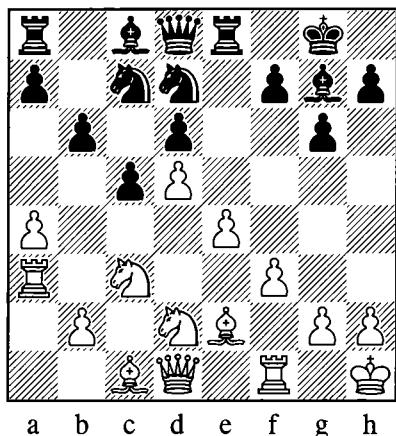
22.d6 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 23.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 24.axb5 axb5

This position occurred in Kauko – Knebel, corr. 1984, and a few subsequent games. So far everyone played 25.f5 which is not a bad move in itself, but there is something even stronger.



25. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ N $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 26. $\mathbb{E}a7$ $\mathbb{E}b7$ 27. $\mathbb{E}a8$

White has a serious initiative – the main threat is f4-f5.



14... $\mathbb{W}e7$

Although this position should be close to equal, Black remains at a small but unpleasant disadvantage.

15.a5!

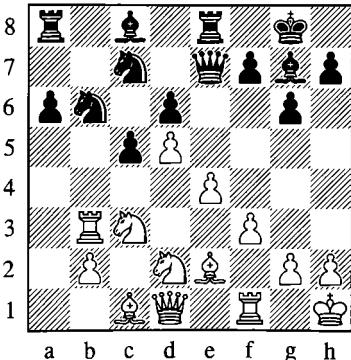
15. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ is slightly less accurate: 15... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 17. a5 a6 18. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}b8=$ Kramnik – Topalov, Dortmund 2001.

15... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

15... a6!?

I was hoping to find something encouraging here, but if White finds a few good moves the situation will be anything but rosy.

16. $a \times b6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 17. $\mathbb{E}b3$

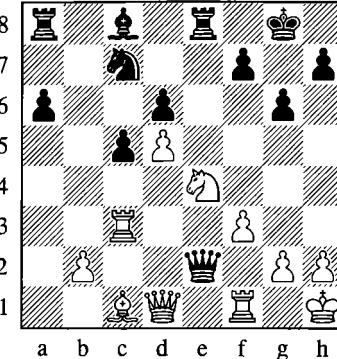


17... $\mathbb{Q}bxd5?$

This was my big idea, but it does not quite work.

Objectively 17... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ is the best chance, followed by attempting to hold the ensuing pawn-down endgame: 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $a \times b$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}eb8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xb8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{E}xb8\pm$

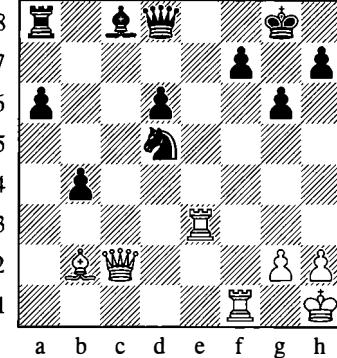
18. $e \times d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 19. $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$



20... $\mathbb{E}xe4$

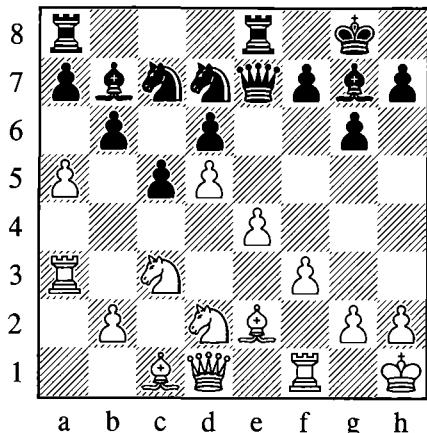
20... $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{E}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ (22. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6\pm$) 22... $f6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}d7$ 25. $\mathbb{E}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 26. $\mathbb{E}e3\pm$ 21. $f \times e4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 22. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 23. $b4!$ $c \times b4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

25... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 26. $\mathbb{W}c4+-$



26. $\mathbb{W}e4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 27. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $f6$ 28. $\mathbb{E}xf6$

Despite having an extra piece and three extra pawns, Black is powerless against the mating threats.



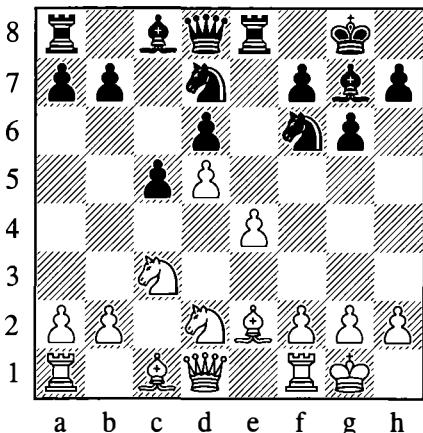
16. $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{Q}xb5N$

This is a better chance than 16... $\mathbb{Q}f6$! 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc7 \mathbb{Q}xc7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$ as occurred in Mamedyarov – Ivanchuk, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xb5 \mathbb{Q}ed8\pm$

Black has reasonable defensive chances, but I don't see any active ideas for him.

B2) 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

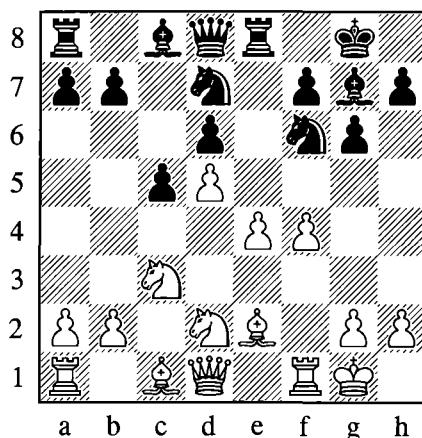


This normally leads to a more complicated position than 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$, and is my primary recommendation. As with most major opening tabiyas, a whole host of different moves have been tried at one time or another, but I will

focus on the three most important ones: **B21) 11.f4**, **B22) 11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$** and **B23) 11.a4**.

Before diving into the analysis, let me explain a bit about the different move orders. Things can get rather confusing as the moves a2-a4 and ...a6 can be played at any moment. (For example, in many games Black has favoured the move order 10...a6 11.a4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, leading immediately to variation B232 on page 93.) The other two lines will cover some specific situations in which Black may steer the game in a different direction, hoping to exploit the absence of the ...a6 move in some way.

B21) 11.f4



White supports a future e4-e5 push, while also stopping the black knight from going to e5. Fortunately this piece has another way to get active.

11...c4!

The same move can be played with or without the inclusion of the moves a2-a4 and ...a6, but we will see that leaving the a-pawns at home should benefit Black slightly. The position after 11...a6 12.a4 c4 will be examined later in variation B23212, beginning on page 95.

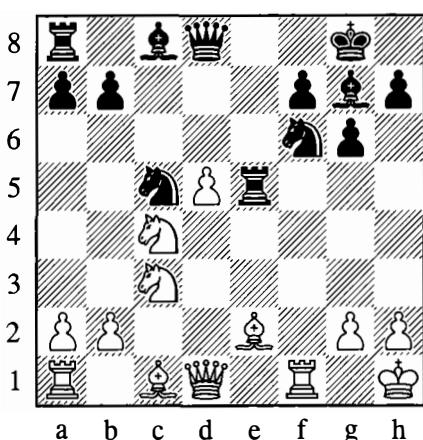
12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

After 12.♕xc4 ♜c5 Black immediately regains the pawn: 13.e5 (13.♗b5 does not help: 13...♝e7 14.♝e1? ♜g4 15.e5 ♛d3+ Nemec – Sikora Lerch, Stary Smokovec 1977.) 13...dxe5 14.fxe5 ♜xe5 15.f3 ♜e8± B. Toth – Velimirovic, Budva 1981.

12... $\text{Nc}5$ 13.e5

There is no point in trying to protect the pawn: 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5! With pawns on a4 and a6, this would not be possible. 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}fxe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4?$ (16. $\mathbb{Q}ba3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6\bar{F}$) Now in Weber – Hartmann, Berlin 1972, Black could already have got a winning position with 16.... $\mathbb{Q}a6N-$.

13...dxe5 14.fxe5 ♗xe5 15.♘xc4



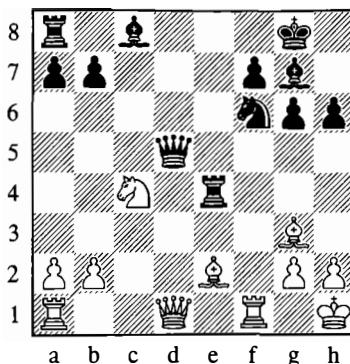
15... $\text{e}8$

15... $\mathbb{B}f5$ is slightly less accurate. The stem game continued: 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (The rare 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ seems more promising, and has made a heavy score for White.) 16... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (16... $b6$ 17.d6 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{B}e5=$) 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $b6=$ Rytov – Tal, Tallinn 1979.

16. ♔g5 h6 17. ♔xf6

17. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ is well met by 17... $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$. Here we see another advantage of leaving the a-pawns on their original squares, as after 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ the b6-square is protected and

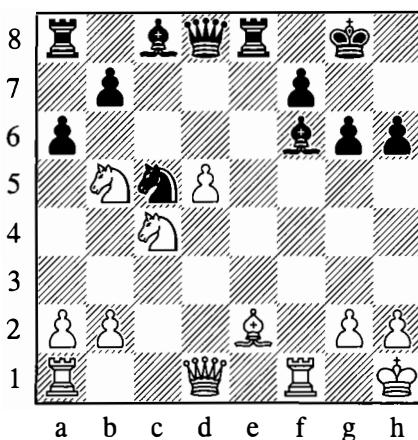
White must fight for a draw as follows:



20. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{B}d4$ 22. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$
 23. $\mathbb{B}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 24. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 25. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$
 26. $bxc4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7\bar{f}$ Hage – De Smet, corr. 1995.

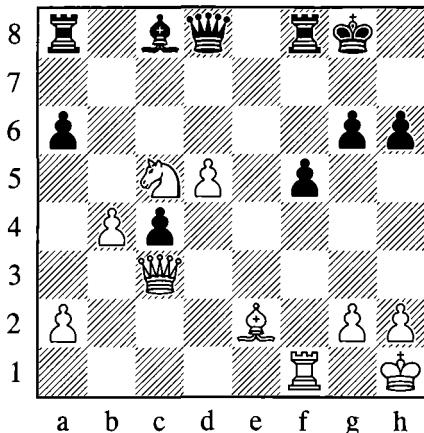
17... ♕xf6 18. ♔b5 a6

White has active knights and a passed d-pawn, but Black has good prospects for counterplay on the dark squares. We will follow a top-flight game for a few more moves.



19. $\mathbb{Q}bd6$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 20. $b4$ $\mathbb{Q}a4$ 21. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}c3$
 22. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $b5$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $bxcc4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$
 25. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $f5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c5$

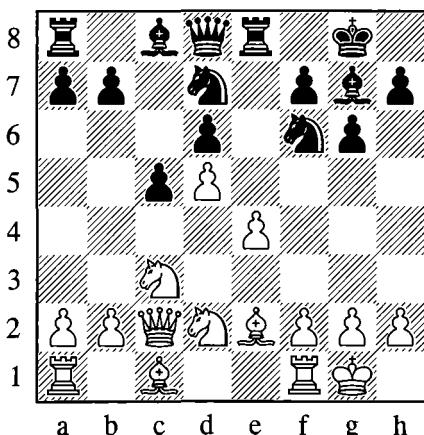
This position was reached in Jobava – Radjabov, Novi Sad 2009. White has made an interesting exchange sacrifice, but I believe Black could have maintained at least equal chances with:



26... $\mathbb{Q}h7N$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{E}a7!?$

Intending ... $\mathbb{W}d6$ and rook(s) to the e-file.

B22) 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$



White overprotects the e4-pawn and prepares $\mathbb{Q}c4$.

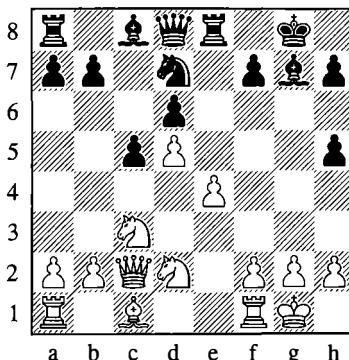
11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Black can postpone moving his a-pawn for a moment. Instead 11...a6 12.a4 reaches line B2322 on page 96.

When discussing the present variation one cannot avoid mentioning the following move: 11... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$

This was famously played by Fisher in his match against Spassky.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{G}xh5$



The idea of allowing doubled h-pawns was revolutionary at the time. Despite Fischer's eventual success, the plan is considered strategically risky and most Benoni players do not trust it nowadays. I will give a few more moves of the game for historical interest.

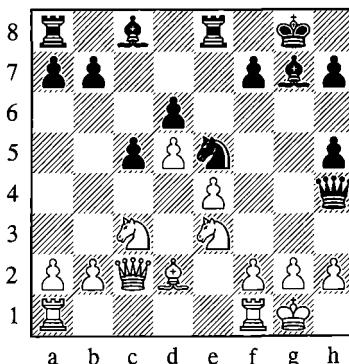
13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

13.a4 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ transposes to a slightly more popular version of the ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ idea. From here 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ has scored heavily for White, and 14.b3?! may also be a good move.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2??$

Too timid.

White could have obtained some advantage with: 15.f3! $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16.a4 a6?! (16... $\mathbb{W}f6N$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e2\pm$) Pojedziniec – Widera, Polanica Zdroj 2010, and now 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2!N$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3\pm$ with a firm grip on the f5-square.



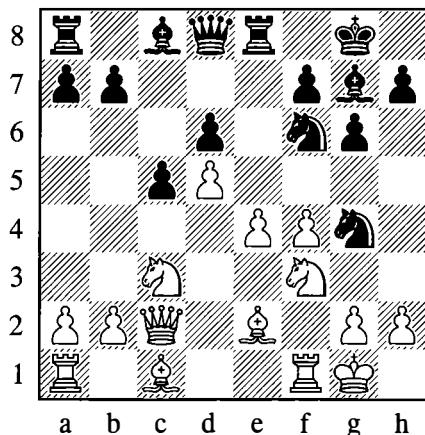
15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $hxg4=$

Spassky – Fischer, Reykjavik (3) 1972. Having straightened out his kingside pawns, Black had a comfortable position and went on to outplay his opponent.

12.f4?!

Stopping ...g5, but this is too risky without preparation. The superior 12.a4 transposes to the later variation B231 on page 91. As you will see, from that position Black can opt for the main lines with 12...a6 or venture the quirkier 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$.

12... $\mathbb{Q}eg4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



13...c4!

This seems to be the most energetic.

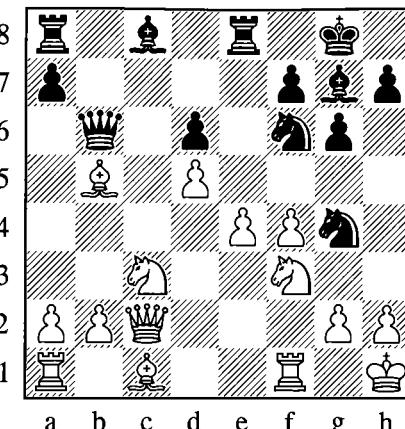
13... $\mathbb{W}e7!?$ N is also interesting, for instance:
14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 16. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$
17. $\mathbb{Q}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{W}xf7$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ c4↑ with good play for the sacrificed exchange.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ b5

This more or less forces a draw.

If Black is determined to play for more he could also consider: 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!?$ N 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}b6\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{W}xf2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (21. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$) 21...f5 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $gxf5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xf5\#$

15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}b6\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$



16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}ef2\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$

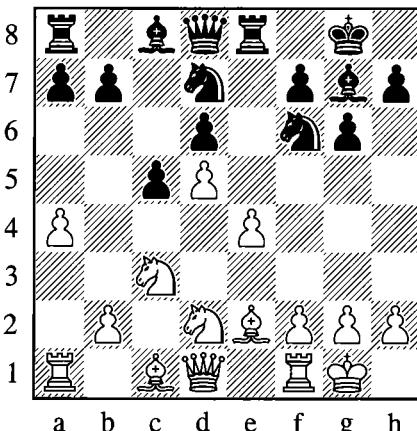
19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}gf2\#$

Obviously 19... $\mathbb{W}g1\#??$ does not work due to 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg1$.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}h3\#$

½–½ Kaposztas – Meleghegyi, Salgotarjan 1977.

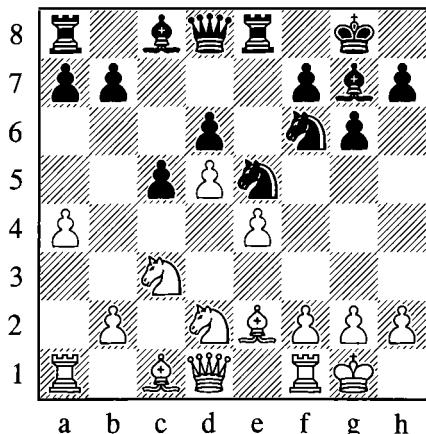
B23) 11.a4



This typical pawn move is not only useful in preventing ...b5, but also enables the queen's rook to enter the game via the a3-square. Here I considered the independent possibility of

B231) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$, but focused mainly on B232) 11... $a6$, which reaches a popular position that can arise via many different move orders.

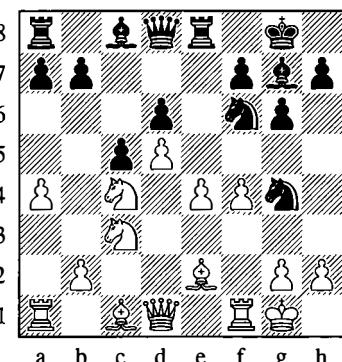
B231) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$



With this move Black activates his pieces in the centre while potentially trying to save a tempo by doing without the ... $a6$ move.

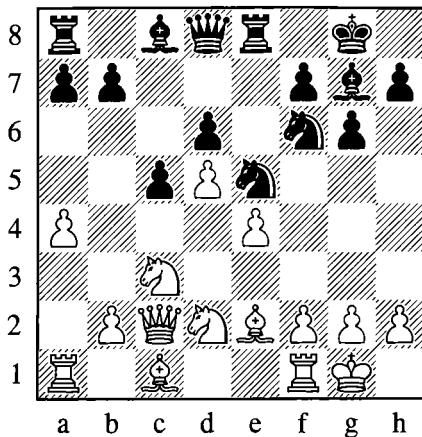
12. $\mathbb{W}c2$

The immediate attempt to chase the knight meets with a stern punishment: 12.f4? $\mathbb{Q}eg4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4?$! This is the move White would like to play, but it fails for tactical reasons:



13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 17.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xe3\#$ Black emerges a clear pawn ahead, Lizardo Alvarez – Verducci Silvelo, corr. 1999.

12. $\mathbb{B}a3$ g5 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ resembles variation B23222 on page 98, and may transpose immediately if Black plays 13... $a6$.



12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$!?

A rare move, but one which I believe deserves attention.

12... $a6$ leads to variation B23222, while 12... $g5$ 13. $\mathbb{B}a3$ is the same as the 12. $\mathbb{B}a3$ note above.

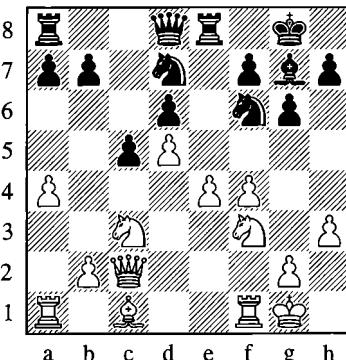
13.f3

This seems like the most ambitious attempt.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}fxg4$ 14.h3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Black should have no problems here, as he has managed to exchange a pair of minor pieces while White's remaining bishop is still undeveloped.

15.f4 $\mathbb{Q}ed7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



16...c4!N

I found one game which continued:
 16... $\mathbb{B}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{B}e1$ c4 18.e5 dxe5 19.fxe5
 $\mathbb{Q}xd5?!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$
 22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{B}xe1\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ c3 24.b3 Kozul –
 Chatalbashev, Zagreb 2010. The machine
 rates this position as close to equal, but I
 don't see a great deal of compensation for
 Black and in the game he lost quickly.

Black can improve on that line with
 19... $\mathbb{Q}h5?N$ but after best play it gets him
 no more than equality: 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f6 21.exf6
 $\mathbb{W}b6\#$ 22. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}xf2\#$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}hxf6=$

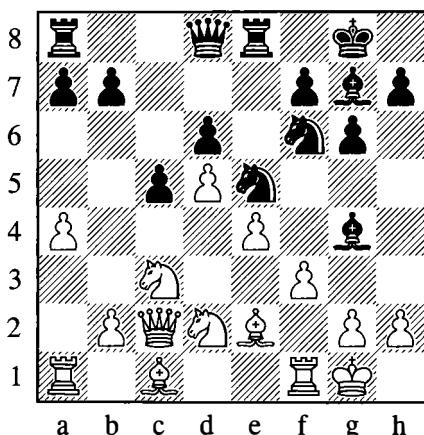
I like the text move more, as it gives the
 knight faster access to the c5-square while
 avoiding the drama and complications of
 the aforementioned game.

17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

17... $\mathbb{B}e1?$ $\mathbb{Q}c5\#$

17...a6 18. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ $\mathbb{W}a5$

Black has a good position.



13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

The bishop retreats, having provoked a slight
 weakening of White's kingside. The f6-knight
 is already eyeing the h5- and f4-squares, while
 the bishop dreams of delivering a deadly check
 from d4.

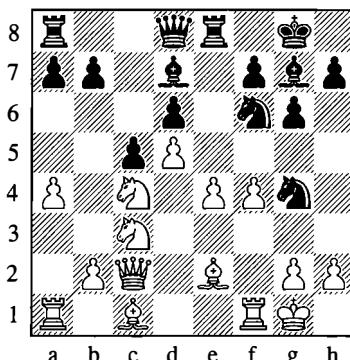
14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Usually White would prefer not to exchange

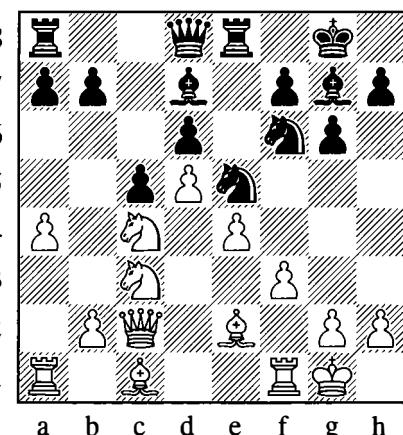
these knights, but he needs to develop his
 queenside pieces somehow.

14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 15.g3 occurred in Galliamova
 – Cmilyte, Nalchik 2011, and here 15...f5?N
 looks promising for Black.

14.f4 $\mathbb{Q}eg4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4?$ is worse, and led to
 crushing defeats for White in two games:



15... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$
 $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{B}e1+$
 Evdokimov – Volokitin, Moscow 2008.)
 17... $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{B}e1$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$
 (20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$) 20... $\mathbb{B}xa1+$ Simunek –
 Splichal, e-mail 2004.



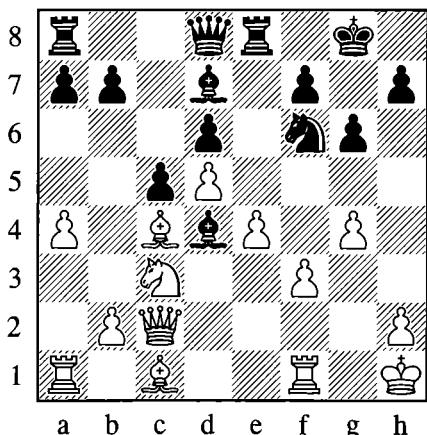
14... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 16.g4 $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$
 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

Now the knight must decide where to go.

17... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ N

I prefer this over the more obvious 17... $\mathbb{Q}g7$, after which 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ h5 19.h3 $\mathbb{W}h4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}h2!$ maintained an edge for White in Markus – Dvirnyy, Nova Gorica 2011.

The text move keeps the knight in a better position. In the aforementioned game Black may have been reluctant to leave his dark-squared bishop short of squares, but I have not found a convincing way for White to exploit this.



18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

19.f4? loses at least a pawn after 19... $\mathbb{Q}d4$.

19... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$?

The tempting 19...h5?! is not quite correct. I spent some time checking variations such as 20.gxh5 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ a6 23.a5 $\mathbb{W}h4$, but eventually judged that the tremendous potential of White's dark-squared bishop was more significant than the slight damage to his kingside.

If Black does not wish to allow the weakening of his own kingside structure, then 19... $\mathbb{Q}c8$?! could be considered, in order to free the d7-square for the knight.

20.g5

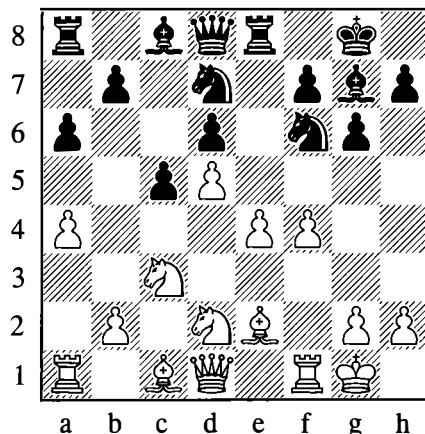
20. $\mathbb{Q}e2=$ repeats the position.

20... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ gxh5=

Black's position seems okay, as it will be hard for White to get to the weak h5-pawn without leaving himself exposed in some other area.

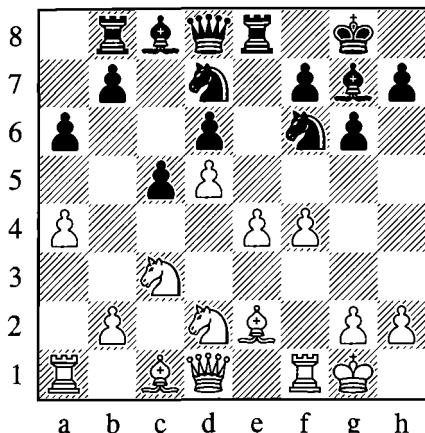
B232) 11...a6

This position can be considered the most significant branching point of the present chapter. It has occurred in over a thousand games, via numerous move orders whereby Black plays ...a6 and White answers with a2-a4 at some stage in the opening. We will consider two main plans for White: B2321) 12.f4 and B2322) 12. $\mathbb{W}c2$.

B2321) 12.f4

If White wishes to play a set-up with f2-f4, it would be advisable for him to aim for this version with the pawns already on a6 and a4. Compared with the earlier variation B21, the inclusion of those two pawn moves should help White slightly should Black play ...c4.

Here I have analysed two replies for Black: B23211) 12... $\mathbb{E}b8$ and B23212) 12...c4. (Even though the latter move compares a little unfavourably with variation B21, it is still quite playable.)

B23211) 12...♝b8**13.♔h1**

This has been the most popular move. Several others have been tried, but as usual I will keep the focus on what I believe to be the most important lines.

One noteworthy game continued 13.a5 b5 14.axb6 ♜xb6 15.♔h1 c4 16.♝a3 ♜c7= 17.b4?! cxb3 18.♝xb3 ♜fd7 with good play for Black in Navara – Gashimov, Reggio Emilia 2007.

It is also worth pointing out that 13.♝c2 transposes to variation B23221, which can be found on page 96.

13...♜c7 14.e5?!

This is by no means forced, but it certainly seems to be the critical move.

14...dxe5 15.♝c4 b5

This forcing move has been Black's most popular reply.

15...e4?! leads to an interesting struggle, although after 16.f5 ♜a8 17.♔f4 ♜d8 White's chances were slightly higher in Ponomariov – Gashimov, Nice 2010.

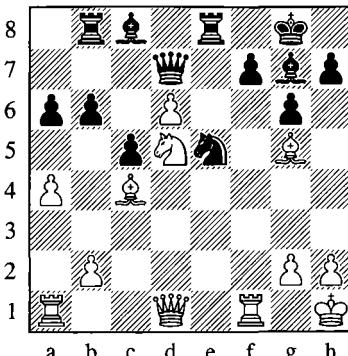
15...b6!?

This rare move deserves consideration.

16.fxe5 ♜xe5 17.d6

17.♔xe5 ♜xe5 18.♔f4 ♜e8∞

17...♛d7 18.♔g5 ♜fg4 19.♔d5 ♜xc4 20.♔xc4 ♜e5

**21.♝xf7?!**

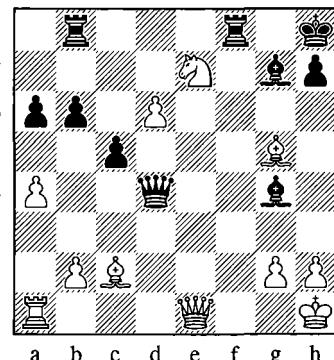
A beautiful combination, even if it not entirely correct.

21...♜xf7 22.♔e7† ♔h8 23.♔xf7 ♜f8

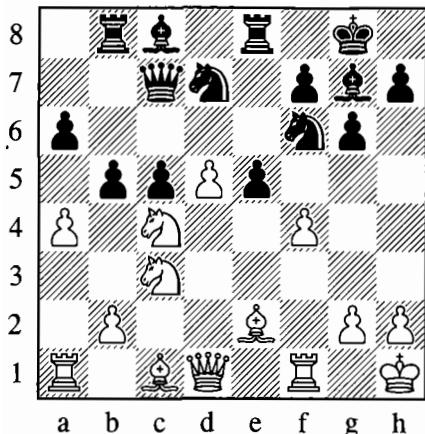
The simple 23...♚b7?N 24.♔xe8 ♜xe8 leaves Black with an excellent position where his bishops dominate the board. 25.♛d2 ♜f8†

24.♗xg6 ♜g4 25.♛d2 ♜d7 26.♗c2 ♜d4 27.♗e2 ♜g4 28.♗e1

Now in Jobava – Vocaturo, Reggio Emilia 2009, Black could have taken control with:



28...♜xb2!N 29.♔c1 ♜c3 30.♗e3 ♜xc2 31.♗xc2 ♜f1† 32.♗g1 ♜xg1† 33.♗xg1 ♜d4† 34.♗f1 ♜d7†

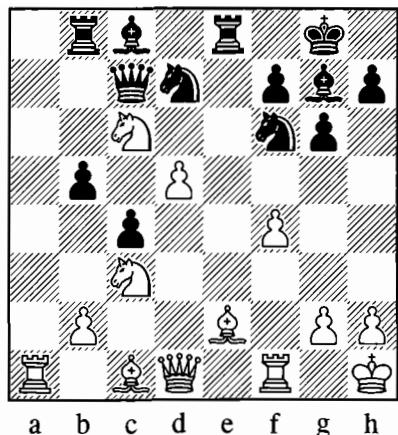


16.axb5 axb5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ c4

17... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$? has never been played for good reason: 18.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ c4 20. $\mathbb{W}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21.d6 $\mathbb{W}c5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$

18. $\mathbb{Q}c6$

In this sharp position I found an important improvement over the existing games.



18...b4!N

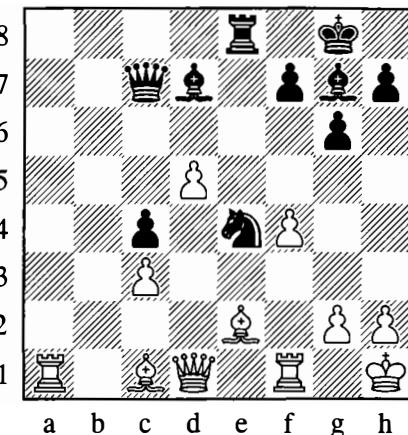
Black can give up the exchange to fight for the initiative.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$

19. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xd5$? (20. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\mathbb{Q}$) 20... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xc4$

$\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b7\pm$

19...bxc3 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 21.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}e4$



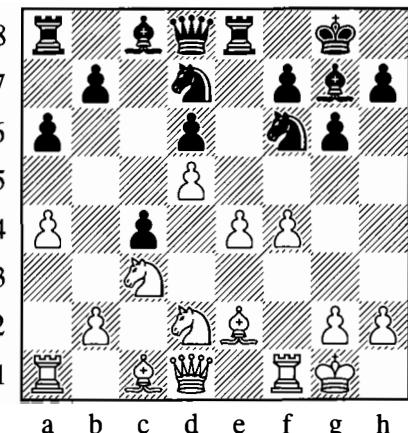
22. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c5$!?

22... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 24. $\mathbb{W}c2=$

23. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 24.d6 h5↑

Despite being (temporarily at least) the exchange and a pawn down, Black has more than enough compensation.

B23212) 12...c4



This line closely resembles the earlier variation B21, and the reader may wish to turn back to page 87 to compare the two paths. Once again I will point out the key places

where the inclusion of the moves a2-a4 and ...a6 makes a difference.

13.♕h1

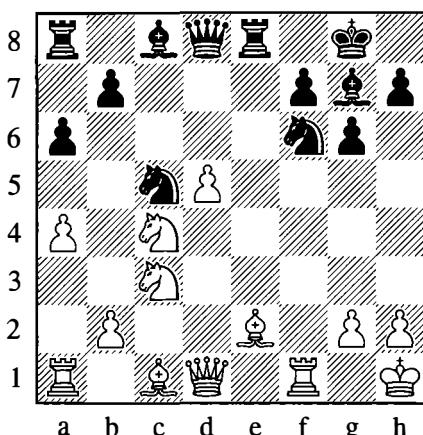
This has been the most popular reply, and I think it is the strongest one available. In the event of 13.♕f3 Black does not have the same ...b5 idea that was noted in line B21, but 13...♝c5 still offers him a fine position.

13...♝c5 14.e5

Once again 14.♕f3 is not too impressive after 14...♜d7, for instance: 15.e5 dxe5 16.fxe5 ♜xe5 17.♝xc4 ♜e8 18.♕f4 ♝fe4† Ehlvest – Szekely, Tallinn 1983.

14...dxe5 15.fxe5 ♜xe5 16.♝xc4 ♜e8

16...♜f5?! is risky as the rook is short of squares: 17.♕f4 ♝fe4 18.♝xe4 ♝xe4 19.♗c2 ♜f6 20.♝e3 ♜a5 21.♝xf5 ♜xf5 22.♗b3 ♜xd5 23.♗c4+– Schmidt – Olszewski, Warsaw 2009.



17.♕g5 h6 18.♕h4 ♝ce4 19.♝xe4 ♜xe4

20.♗g3 ♜h5

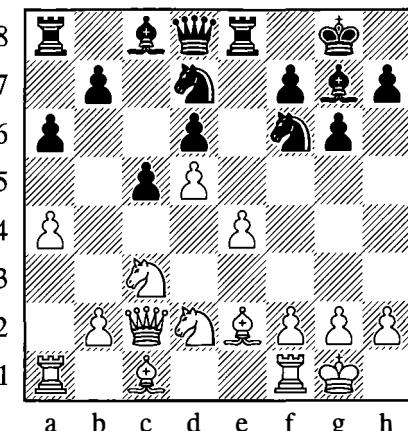
Compared with line B21, let us note that 20...♜xd5? is a blunder here as 21.♗b6 wins material.

20...♝g4?! is a playable alternative though: 21.♗xg4 ♜xg4 22.♗d6 ♜d4 23.♗f3 ♜d7 24.♗ad1 ♜xd1 25.♗xd1 ♜xa4= Glorstad – Achilles, e-mail 2008.

21.♗xh5 ♜xc4=

Hage – Ziegert, corr. 1999.

B2322) 12.♗c2



This move is more solid. White overprotects the e4-pawn in preparation for f2-f4 and/or ♜c4. We will investigate two responses for Black: B23221) 12...♜b8 and B23222) 12...♝e5.

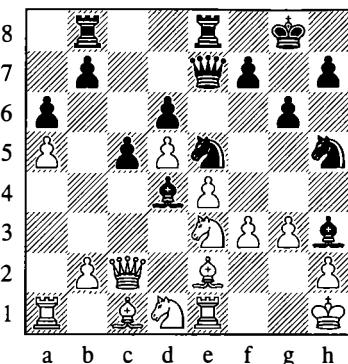
B23221) 12...♜b8

This move leads to a sharp struggle with White preparing e4-e5 and Black preparing ...b5.

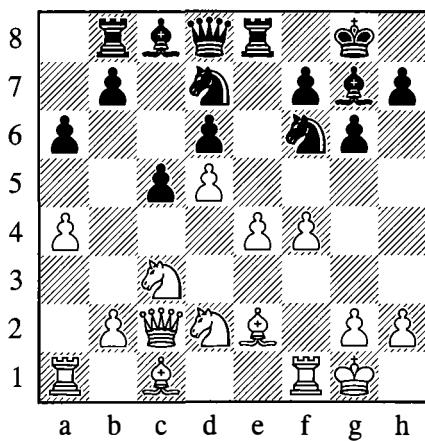
13.f4

This has not been the most popular choice, but it immediately transposes to a position that has occurred more frequently than that after any other move. Therefore I will treat it as the main line.

It is also worth mentioning: 13.♗c4 ♜b6 14.♝e3 (14.♗a3 ♜e7 15.a5 ♜bd7 16.♗e1 b5 17.axb6 ♜xb6??) 14...♜e7 15.f3 ♜h5! A typical method to obtain counterplay on the dark squares. 16.a5 ♜d7 17.g3 ♜d4 18.♗cd1 ♜e5 19.♗h1 ♜h3 20.♗e1



Now in Levar – Sutkovic, Rijeka 2011, Black should have played 20... $\mathbb{Q}f6$?N maintaining sufficient counterplay. 21. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}eg4$!?, 22. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ = is one amusing line, although it would be a shame if such a rich position were to end in a premature draw.



13... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

Tucking the king away has been White's usual choice.

14... $b6$?

Black is waiting for the right moment to spring forwards.

The main alternative is:

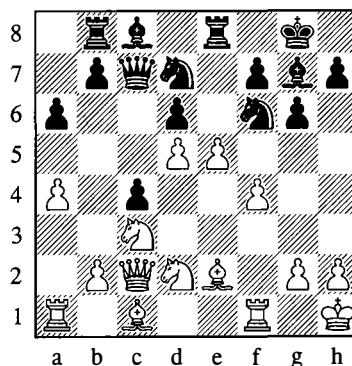
14... $c4$

This move is certainly spirited, although Black may fall a little short of equality.

15. $e5$!

White should strive for the initiative instead of material gains.

15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ leads to an endgame where Black is doing fine: 15... $b5$ 16. $axb5$ $AXB5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $b4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}xc2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $b3$ Black has good compensation, for instance: 21. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$!N (21... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Gauri – Homatidis, Chalkidiki 2007.) 22. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 24. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}a7$?! $f5$??

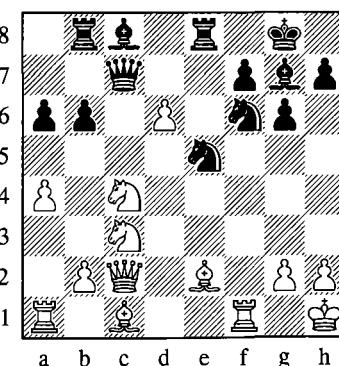


15... $dxe5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $b6$

16... $b5$?! does not quite work: 17. $axb5$ $AXB5$ 18. $d6$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ Now in Gershon – Manor, Israel 2002, the strongest continuation would have been: 19. $\mathbb{Q}a5$!N $\mathbb{W}a6$ 20. $b4$??

17. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $d6$

We have been following the game Schorra – Hirmer, e-mail 2007. Here Black's best chance would have been:



18... $\mathbb{W}d7$!N

But even here White maintains some initiative.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{B}xe5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$
22. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{B}xb7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d3\pm$

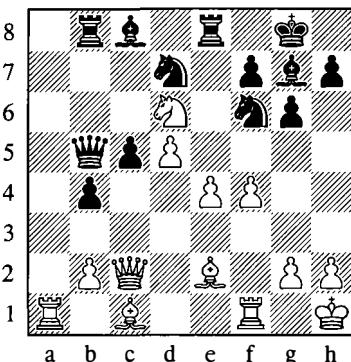
15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Most players have chosen this move, which meets the challenge head-on. If White does not want to follow this path then he could try just about any sensible non-committal move. In most cases Black can reply with either a delayed ... $c4$ or the waiting move ... $h5$ to improve his prospects on the kingside.

15... $b5$ 16. $axb5$ $AXB5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$

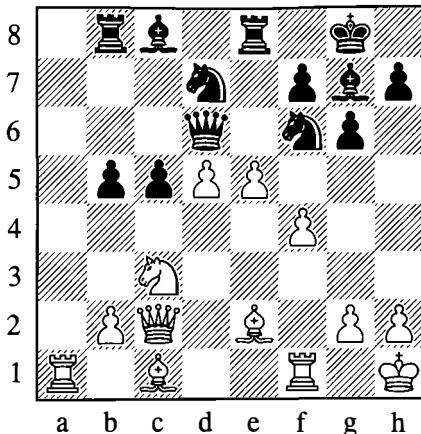
This has been the most popular move but it is not dangerous.

17. $\mathbb{Q}a5?$ is more challenging, but Black is surviving and thriving here too. 17... $b4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}b6N$ (18... $\mathbb{B}xb5?$ was also interesting in Lauber – Syperek, Halle 1993, but I prefer the text move slightly.) 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$



20... $b3?$ (20... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 22. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$) 21. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ (22. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}d4\bar{\square}$) 22... $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 23. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$ 24. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 25. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\bar{\square}$ Black has a pawn and excellent piece play for the exchange.

17... $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 18. $e5$



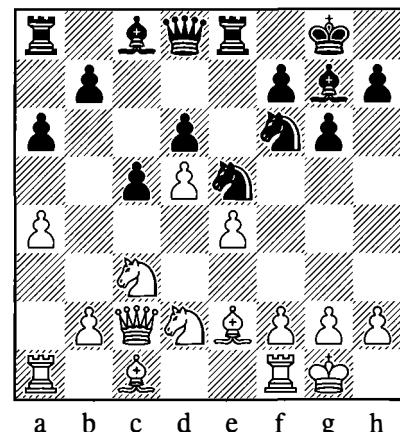
18... $\mathbb{Q}xe5?N$

I like this new idea, although there is nothing wrong with following the existing examples: 18... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19. $exf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ (19... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7=$ B. Toth – Cosulich, La Spezia 1973.) 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5=$ Pulvett – Diamant, Montevideo 2009.

19. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $c4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $b4\bar{\square}$

Not for the first time, Black has a pawn and a promising initiative for the exchange.

B23222) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e5$



I find this to be the more natural move, and it does not lead to excessive complications. Overall I would prefer this method of playing

– not only is Black theoretically okay, he also avoids having to learn too many long forcing lines.

13. $\mathbb{E}a3$

This move is by no means uncommon in several Benoni lines. The rook waits on standby, ready to swing into action if needed on the other side of the board.

13.h3 is the second most common move in the position. Black can reply with the thematic 13...g5 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ g4 16.hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ (or 17... $\mathbb{Q}d4$?N \rightarrow) with a good position, Napalkov – Grigoryev, corr. 2004.

13.f4?! $\mathbb{Q}eg4$ is risky for White, for instance: 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$ Oxborough – Curnow, London 1973.

13...g5

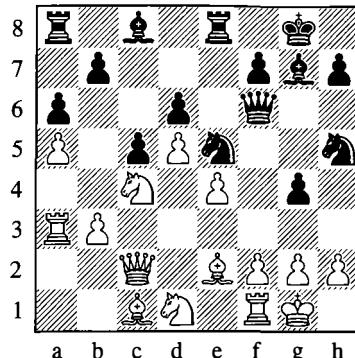
This may look strange to the uninitiated, but it has a clear positional justification. Black is trying to conquer the dark squares in the centre, keeping control of e5 and preparing a possible knight manoeuvre to f4 later.

A playable alternative is: 13... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 14.h3 (14.a5 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{Q}fxg4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ = Beliavsky – Jobava, Wijk aan Zee 2006) 14...g5 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ g4 17.hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ = Kopecky – Fuka, corr. 1987.

14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

The knight is heading for e3 and perhaps later f5 – in White's dreams at least.

Here is an example showing what may happen if White ignores his opponent's kingside play: 14.a5 g4 (14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is another idea, with the possible continuation 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ g4 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e7\rightarrow$ intending ...h5 next.) 15.b3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1?$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}h1N\rightarrow$)



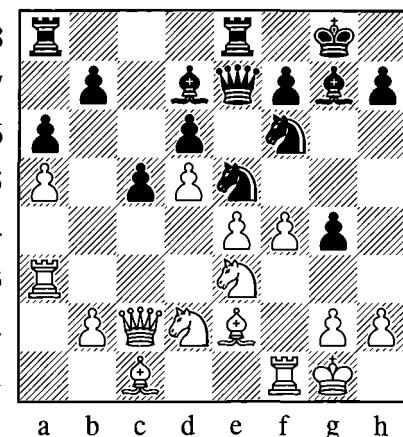
17... $\mathbb{Q}f3\uparrow$! 18.gxf3 gxf3 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 20.b4 $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4\uparrow$ Vefling – Charushin, corr. 1986.

14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

I prefer to finish development rather than manoeuvring the already powerful knight to a different outpost. Nevertheless the more common 14... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ is playable too, for instance: 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ b6 17.f3 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 18.g3 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}dc4$ This was Spraggett – Barlov, New York 1987, and now 19... $\mathbb{W}c7N$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ b5 would have kept the position dynamically equal.

15.a5 g4 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17.f4

17. $\mathbb{Q}e1N$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 18.b3 h5 \rightarrow



17...gxf3 18.gxf3 $\mathbb{Q}h3\uparrow N$

A new idea, although 18... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ also gave

Black reasonable chances in D. Berczes – Bluvshstein, Budapest 2007.

19.♗d1 ♔h5↑

Overall I like the scheme with ...♔e5 and ...g5, as Black gets to follow a simple and active plan without having to remember any complex variations.

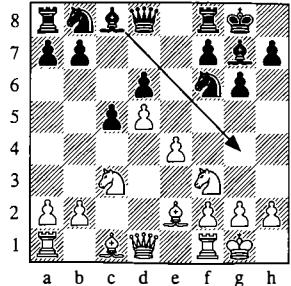
Conclusion

Black seems to be alive and well in the main lines of the Classical Variation, whether they involve wild complications or relatively calm manoeuvring. As in other chapters I covered a variety of playable options, so you can choose the one that best matches your own style and tournament tactics.



e4 Systems

Classical Variation with ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$



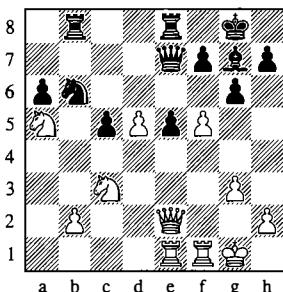
Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0 9.0-0

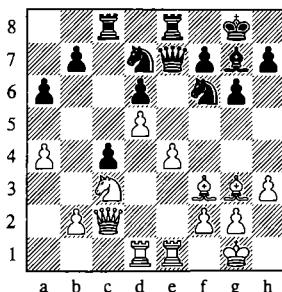
A) 9...a6	102
B) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$	109
B1) 10.h3?!	109
B2) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$	110
B3) 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$	111

A) note to 15.a5



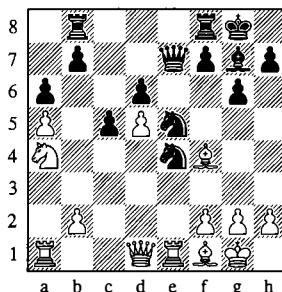
24...c4!N

B1) note to 13... $\mathbb{Q}c7$!?



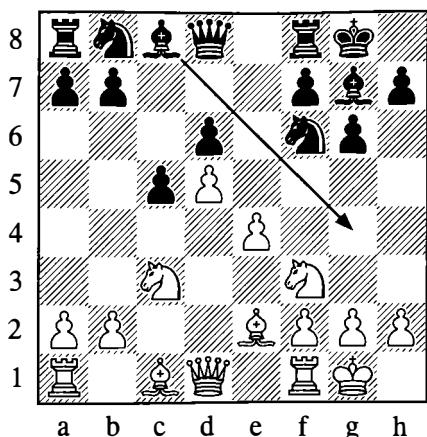
17... $\mathbb{Q}c5$!N

B3) after 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$



17...g5!N

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ 0-0 9.0-0



The plan with ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ is quite popular because it solves two of the problems that Black traditionally faces in the Benoni. First and foremost, he guarantees himself the chance to exchange his light-squared bishop, which might otherwise struggle to find a meaningful role in the game. Secondly, in the likely event of the bishop taking the knight on f3, Black will gain improved control over the e5-square, making it hard for White to execute one of his most important ideas.

If Black wants to put his bishop on g4, the first decision he must make is whether to insert the preliminary moves ...a6 and a2-a4. I don't know of a truly compelling reason to favour one approach over the other, so I decided to analyse both A) 9...a6 and B) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$.

A) 9...a6 10.a4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$

10... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ takes us back to the previous chapter.

11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

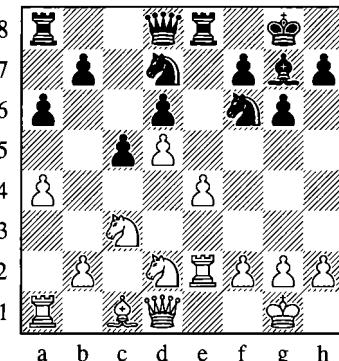
11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ can be compared with variation B2 on page 110.

In a recent game I encountered another idea:
11. $\mathbb{E}e1$

This move does little to improve White's position, and could prove to be a loss of time.

11... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$

Attempting to justify the rook's position.
13... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$



14.f4?!

This only succeeds in creating weaknesses in White's camp.

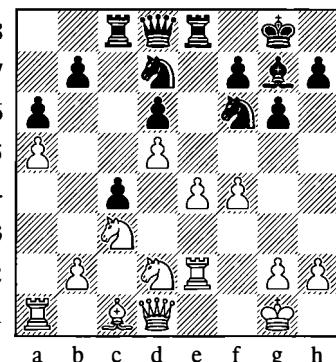
14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 16.a5 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$
17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}ge5=$ Smirnov – Zhao, North Geelong 2011.

14... $\mathbb{E}c8$

14... $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$ N 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ c4??

15.a5 c4

Black often plays this move against a white pawn on f4.

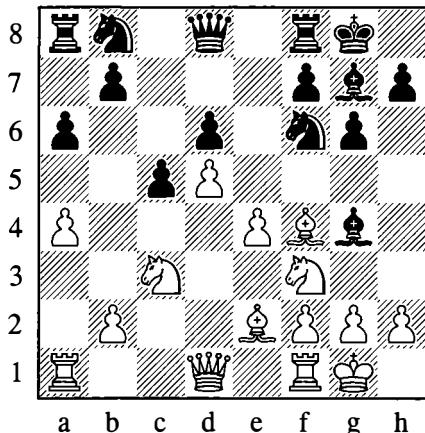


16. $\mathbb{E}a4?$

This terrible move quickly backfires.

16... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Almost everything is winning here, for instance: 16... $\mathbb{Q}g4!N$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $b5\bar{=}$
 17. $\mathbb{B}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 18. $\mathbb{B}xc8$ $\mathbb{W}xc8\bar{=}$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}c4$
 20.e5 dxe5 21.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5\bar{=}$
 Jepson – Petrov, Malmö 2012.



11... $\mathbb{B}e8!?$

“Let him live” said he, and gave the knight a chance to escape! This move leads to a more complicated position.

The alternative is, or course: 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ Got you! 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ For more on this position, refer to the variation B3 on page 111. Personally I would choose to aim for this position, no matter in what move order.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

White defends the e4-pawn and prepares the usual knight dance here to c4. Usefully, his dark-squared bishop has already developed as opposed to being blocked on c1.

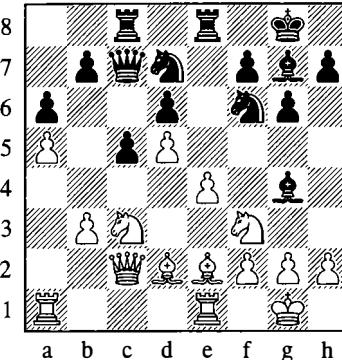
12.h3? does not work: 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ A nice combination! 13.hxg4N (13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}xe4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ 17. $\mathbb{B}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5\bar{=}$ Uhlmann – Fischer, Palma de Mallorca 1970.) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\bar{=}$

If White is determined to avoid exchanging his light-squared bishop then he may try:

12. $\mathbb{W}c2$

Here the game is more positional and slow.
 12... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{B}fe1$

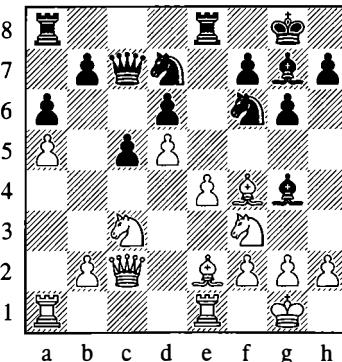
Here is an example involving the great master of the Benoni: 13.b3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 14. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$ 15.a5 $\mathbb{B}bc8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



16...c4! A nice trick, and of course a thematic one for this opening. 17.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18.h3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}fxe4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\bar{=}$ Tukmakov – Tal, Leningrad 1971.

13... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 14.a5

White has done quite well from this position, but I do not believe Black should be in much danger.



14...c4!N

It's strange nobody has tested this thematic move. Unlike several of the other examples we have seen, here it is not even a pawn sacrifice!

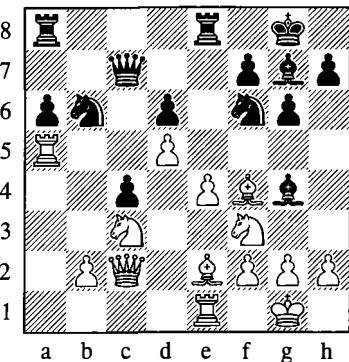
14... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ was played in Kristiansen – Ornstein, Polanica Zdroj 1975, and here White could have claimed a slight edge with: 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4N$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$

14... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ looks reasonable though, and 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ was equal in Eperjesi – Perenyi, Hungary 1980.

15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

Trying to prevent ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, but Black can modify the plan slightly.

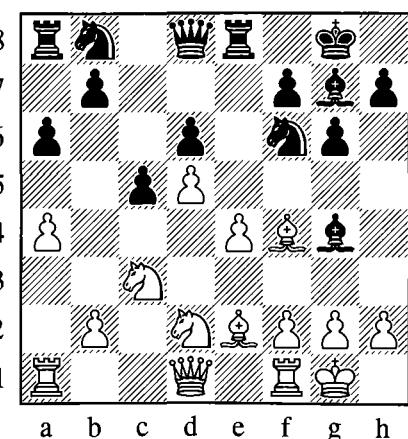
15... $b5$ 16. $a xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a5$



17... $\mathbb{Q}fd7!$

The first knight was diverted away from c5, but the second is ready to step up.

18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $dxc5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}eal$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$
21. $b xc3$ $\mathbb{W}f4=$



12... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xe2$

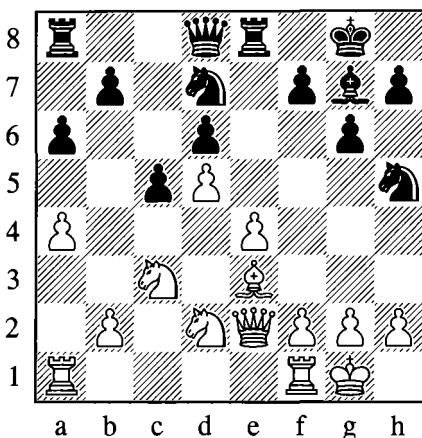
This position can be compared with the later

variation B2, which begins on page 110. It remains to be seen which side will benefit from the inclusion of the moves $\mathbb{Q}f4$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$.

13... $\mathbb{Q}h5$

This is necessary if Black is to develop the other knight smoothly.

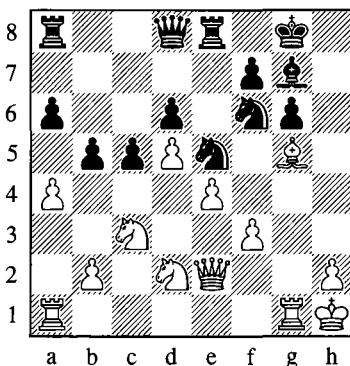
14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$



15.a5

I also checked a few examples where White advanced on the kingside.

15.g4 $\mathbb{Q}hf6$ 16.f3 h6 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ b5
(18... $\mathbb{W}a5?$ N→) 19.g5 hxg5 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$



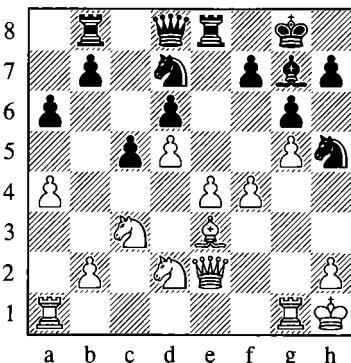
This was Portisch – Kasparov, Moscow 1981, and here I would prefer 20...b4N 21. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ with promising counterplay for Black.

15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

I faced this move a couple of years ago.

15... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $g4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{E}g1$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 18. $g5$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$
19. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$

White has gained some space but his attacking chances remain low, while there is always a chance he will be left with weaknesses later in the game.

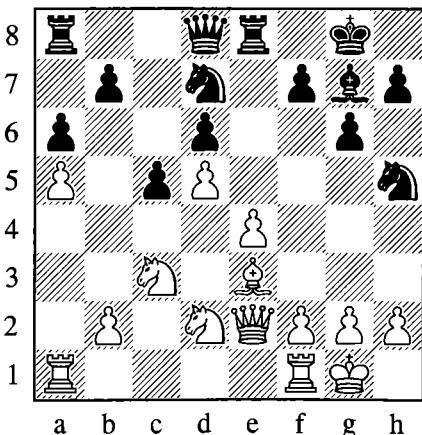


20. $e5?$

Too optimistic. The saner 20. $a5N$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f2$ $f6$ 22. $gxf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ would have kept the position balanced.

20... $dxe5$ 21. $f5$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 22. $\mathbb{W}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $exf4$ 24. $f6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8+$

Dobrev – Petrov, Albena 2011.



15... $\mathbb{Q}d4$

Although Black's bishop seems stronger than

its counterpart, it is not uncommon for Black to exchange them with a view to exploiting the opponent's dark-square weaknesses.

15... $\mathbb{W}c7?!$ has been played, but is too passive in my opinion.

However, there is a more interesting alternative which could be considered:

15... $\mathbb{W}h4$

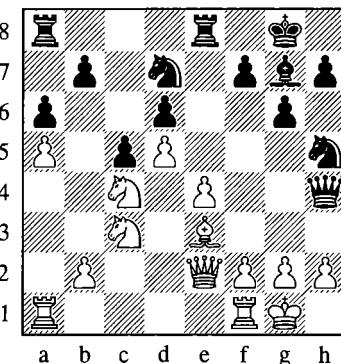
The queen supports the knight, which may jump to f4 at any time.

16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

The most natural move.

16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e7=$ Malich – Suba, East Berlin 1979.

16. $g3$ $\mathbb{W}h3$ was balanced in Andres Gonzalez – Reinaldo Castineira, Aviles 2000. It is worth pointing out the possible continuation 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4N$ $\mathbb{Q}e5=$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd6?!$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ and Black wins.



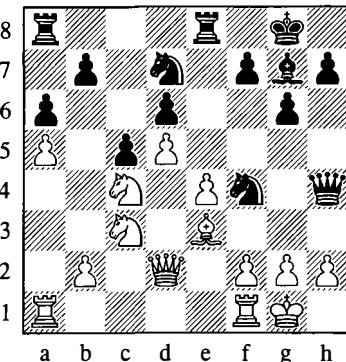
16... $\mathbb{Q}f4$

16... $\mathbb{Q}xc3?$ 17. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{E}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{E}e5\pm$ Van der Vliet – Grooten, Amsterdam 1983.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

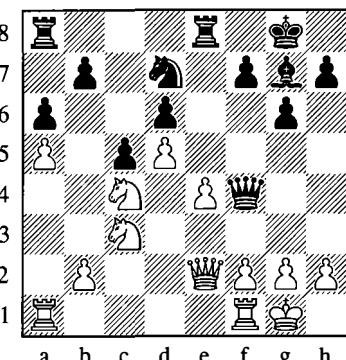
17. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 19. $g3$ leads to a roughly equal endgame after: 19... $\mathbb{W}h5$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 22. $f3$ $f5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c7?!$ (26. $\mathbb{E}xa1N$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8\infty$) 26... $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $fxe4$ 28. $fxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\mp$ Toro Solis de Ovando – Marcussi, corr. 1980.

17... $\mathbb{W}d2?$ has never been played and can be refuted by means of a simple combination:



17... $\mathbb{Q}xg2!$ 18. $\mathbb{B}g5$ (18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2 \mathbb{W}g4\uparrow$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ $\mathbb{W}f3\uparrow$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8\rightarrow$) 18... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 19. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}f3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ The knight is oddly placed on g2, but at the same time highly influential. 22. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $h4$ $h6$ 24. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $hxg5\uparrow$

17... $\mathbb{W}xf4$

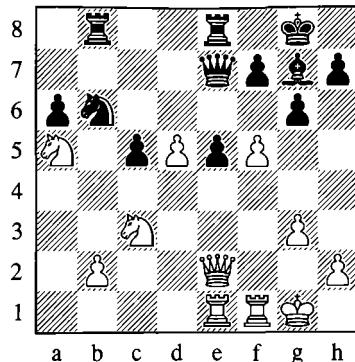


18. $g3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 19. $f4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$
White has the centre, but Black has an excellent bishop.

20... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f3\pm$ Tirabassi – Oakley, corr. 1982.

21. $e5?!$
Premature. 21. $\mathbb{Q}g2N$ would have given White a slight plus.

21... $dxe5$ 22. $f5$ $b5$ 23. $axb6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}a5$



24... $c4!N$

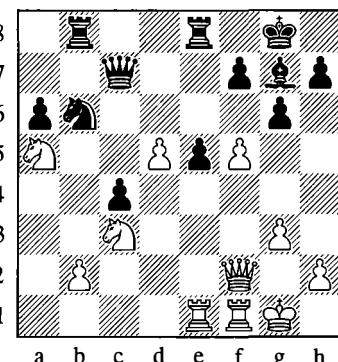
Improving over 24... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 25. $\mathbb{W}xa6$ Auger – Morzeau, corr. 1993, after which 25... $\mathbb{Q}a8N$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ marginally favours White.

25. $\mathbb{W}f2$

25. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{W}c5\uparrow$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xe3\uparrow$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}bc8$ 28. $f6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ $h5$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}fe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\mp$

25... $\mathbb{W}c7!$

Black is targeting the vulnerable knight.



26. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}bc8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $e4\mp$

28... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

28... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 29. $fxg6$ $fxg6$ 30. $\mathbb{W}f7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xa6$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{W}b5$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{W}c5\uparrow$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}cf8$ 36. $\mathbb{Q}xg8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ 37. $\mathbb{Q}fxf7$ $\mathbb{W}c6\uparrow$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}g1=$

29. $fxg6$ $fxg6$ 30. $\mathbb{W}f7\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}b6\uparrow$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}cd8$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}xa6$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8\mp$

To summarize, 15... $\mathbb{W}h4$ leads to rich and dynamic play. In general Black's chances are pretty good, although White may be able to claim an edge with precise play, as mentioned in the note to move 21 above.

16.g4

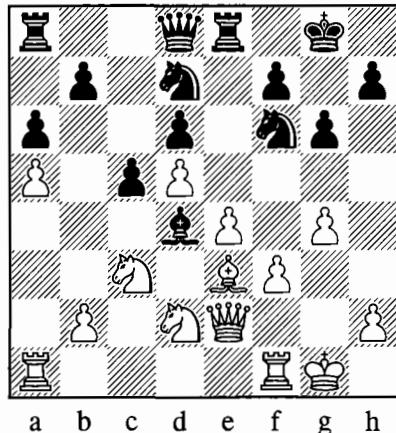
Here are two other ideas:

16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ (16... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ is another idea) 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5=$ Pelletier – Mantovani, Pula 1997.

16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ can be met by 16... $\mathbb{W}f6$! insisting on a battle for the dark squares. (16... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ f5 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$ Olsen – Ruben, corr. 2001.) 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8=$ Blatsky – Hladík, corr. 1999.

16... $\mathbb{Q}hf6$ 17.f3

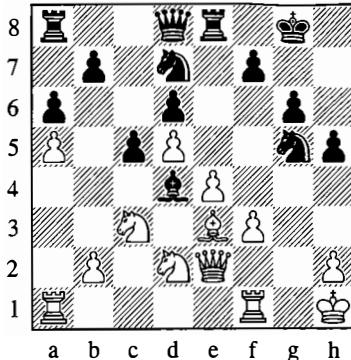
Now Black must decide on which flank to take action.



17...b5

The alternative is:

17...h5! 18.g5 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5N$
Black can and should take the pawn.
19...b5 20.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d3$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xe3\pm$ Laricchiuta – Volpi, corr. 1987.



20. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$

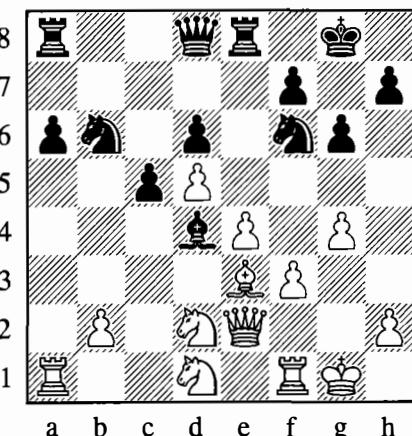
20... $\mathbb{Q}e5?$ does not work: 21. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 22.f4
 $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}axb2$ $\mathbb{W}xe4\sharp$ 24. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xg2\sharp$
25. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}a4\sharp$

21. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ dxе5

White has some positional compensation for the pawn, but no definitive advantage that I can see. A possible continuation is:

23.f4 exf4 24. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}ael$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 26.h4
 $\mathbb{W}xf4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 28.e5≈

18.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d1$



19... $\mathbb{Q}bx d5\text{?}$

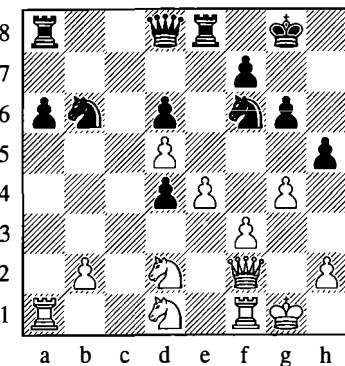
A nice idea, although Black has a second aggressive line available:

19...h5!

This move also happens to set a nasty trap.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4!N$

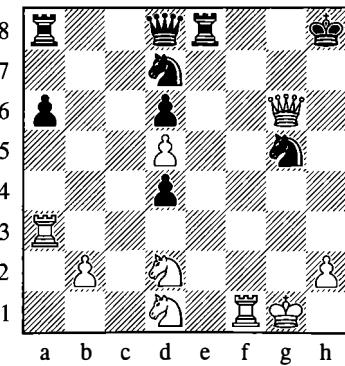
20.h3? is the only move to have been played, but it allows Black to obtain an improved version of the main line: 20... $\mathbb{Q}bx d5!$ 21.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 23. $\mathbb{A}a3$ $\mathbb{B}b4=$ Rajkovic – De Firmian, Vrsac 1983. By comparison with the main line, the move h2-h3 has seriously weakened White's kingside. 20...cx d4 21. $\mathbb{W}f2$



21...hxg4!?

This sharp move looks slightly risky but it seems to hold up.

21... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ is safer: 22.g5 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ (22... $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ 23.exd5 $\mathbb{W}xg5\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 25. $\mathbb{A}a3$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 26.b4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 28. $\mathbb{A}a5$ $\mathbb{W}b3$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{E}ed8$ 30. $\mathbb{W}e1\pm$) 23.f4 f6 24.h4 fxg5 25.hxg5 (25.fxg5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 28. $\mathbb{E}xf3$ $\mathbb{E}xf3$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$) 25... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{E}b8=$ 22.fxg4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 23.g5 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xf7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 25. $\mathbb{A}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xg6$

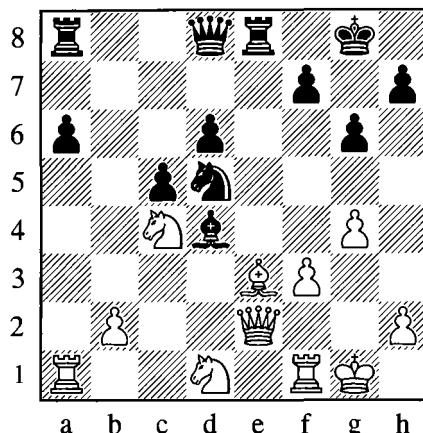


Both kings are in danger, and the position balances out to equality in a few moves.

26... $\mathbb{E}g8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}h6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h7\#$ 28. $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}xg3\#$ 30.hxg3 $\mathbb{E}g8$ 31. $\mathbb{W}f4$ d3=

20.exd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5=$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

I left my engine running on this position for a while, but the only enlightenment I received was a list of lines with zeroes in evaluation.



21.f5

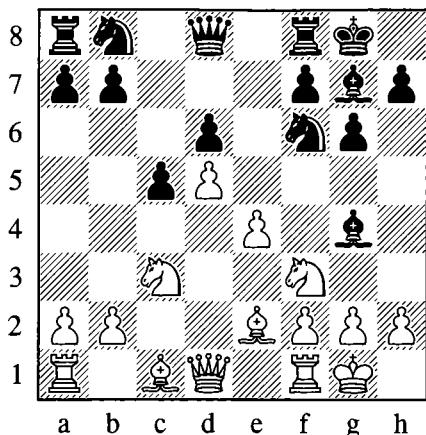
Here are a couple of playable alternatives:

21... $\mathbb{W}f6N$ 22. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}cxe3$ $\mathbb{E}e5$ (23... $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 24. $\mathbb{E}a3$ $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 26. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 27. $\mathbb{E}xc3$ $\mathbb{E}e2$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 29. $\mathbb{E}f2\pm$) 24. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 25. $\mathbb{E}a3$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}e2$ 27. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{W}g5$ 28. $\mathbb{E}xa6$ $\mathbb{W}d2$ Black has no problems in this endgame, despite being a piece down. 29. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{E}xd2$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{E}e5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}d4=$

21... $\mathbb{E}b8N$ 22. $\mathbb{E}a3$ $\mathbb{E}b4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{E}xc4$ (23... $\mathbb{W}b8$ 24. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}cxe3$ $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xa6$ $\mathbb{E}b3$ 27. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{E}d4$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}xe1\#$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xe1\#$) 24. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{E}xe3=$

22.f4 fxg4 23. $\mathbb{E}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}cxe3$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 25. $\mathbb{W}g2$ h5 26. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7N\#$

26... $\mathbb{W}e6?$ 27.f5 was winning for White in Korchnoi – Nunn, London 1980, but the text move keeps the position double-edged.

B) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 

From here White's three most popular continuations have been: **B1) 10.h3?!**, **B2) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$** and **B3) 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$.**

B1) 10.h3?!

This has been played in well over a hundred games, but it is practically a waste of a tempo as Black is usually willing to take on f3 voluntarily. This does not mean White is immediately worse, but at the same time it can hardly be good for his chances of achieving an opening advantage.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ a6

11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}el$ a6 14.a4 $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ is another route to the 13... $\mathbb{W}e7$ line noted below.

12.a4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}c7?!$

In the analogous position from line B3, this move would be slightly risky, for reasons noted on page 111. Here on the other hand, the wasted h2-h3 move noticeably improves Black's chances.

Of course there is nothing at all wrong with the more traditional queen move:

13... $\mathbb{W}e7$

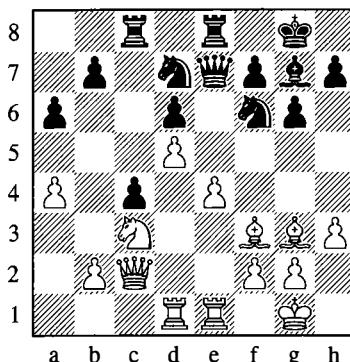
From here the queen supports the ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ move if and when it is needed.

14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

15. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ seems odd, and after 15... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 16.a5 c4 Black was fine in Van Hoolandt – Chatalbashev, Val Thorens 2008.

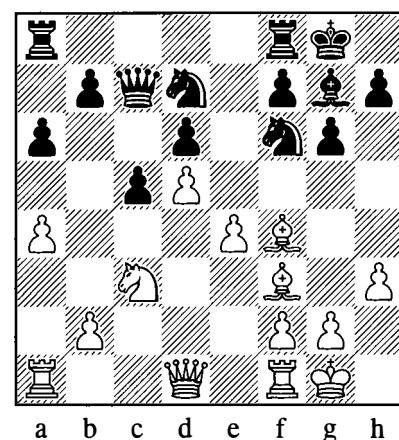
15...c4 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$

Now in Petkov – Berelowitsch, Eupen 2007, Black could have played:



17... $\mathbb{Q}c5!N$ 18.e5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 19.e6 $\mathbb{Q}e5$

With equal chances.



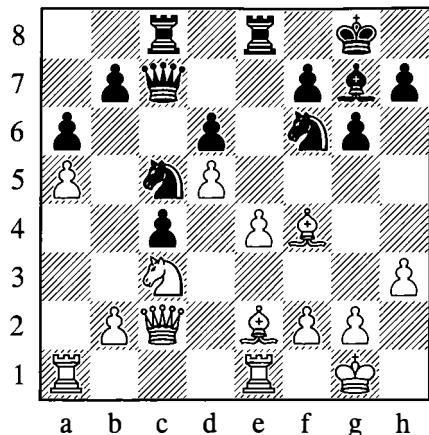
14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ c4 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 17.a5

17. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}ce8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$

20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ occurred in Tsatsalashvili – Kushka, Rijeka 2010, and now 20... $\mathbb{Q}f6N$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ would have been equal.

17... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

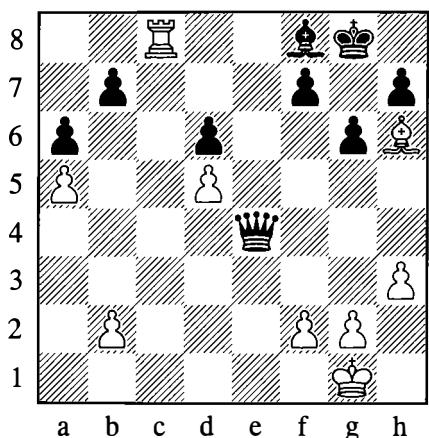
This leads to mass exchanges culminating in an amusing draw.



18.♕xc4 ♔cxe4 19.♔xe4 ♕xe4 20.♗xe4
♔xe4 21.♗xe4 ♕xc4 22.♗c1

22.♗xc4 ♕xc4 23.♗xd6 ♕xb2 24.♗b1 ♕c1†
25.♗xc1 ♕xc1= Forintos – Anka, Hungary
2005.

22...♗xe4 23.♗xc8† ♕f8 24.♗h6



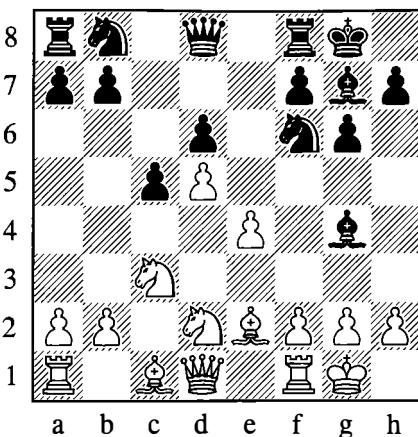
24...♗e1†

24...♗e7N= could also be followed by a swift handshake.

25.♗h2 ♗e5† 26.♗g1

½–½ Rezsek – Leviczki, Balatonlelle 2009.

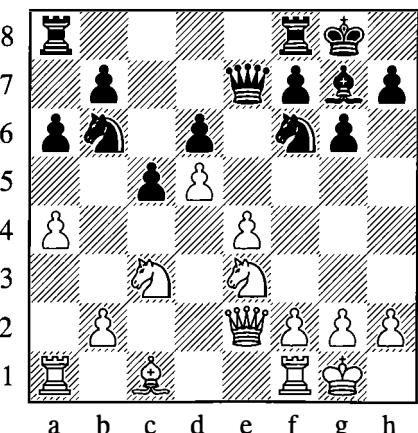
B2) 10.♘d2



Compared with the 12.♘d2 move seen in the main line of variation A, here the knight retreat has the disadvantage of blocking the dark-squared bishop on its original square. This means that when the knight arrives on c4, it can be chased away before the bishop arrives on f4 to attack the d6-pawn.

10...♕xe2 11.♗xe2 a6 12.a4 ♘bd7 13.♘c4
♘b6 14.♘e3 ♗e7

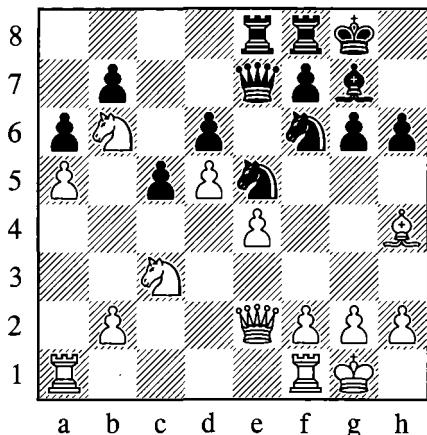
14...♗e8 is slightly less accurate: 15.a5 ♘bd7 (15...♘c8 16.f3 ♘d7±) 16.♘c4 ♘e5 17.♘b6
♗b8 18.♗g5± Black's pieces are slightly lacking in coordination and he still has to work for equality.



15.a5 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}ae8!$

Compared with the previous note, it is obvious that Black's pieces are working more harmoniously here.

18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6 19. $\mathbb{Q}h4$



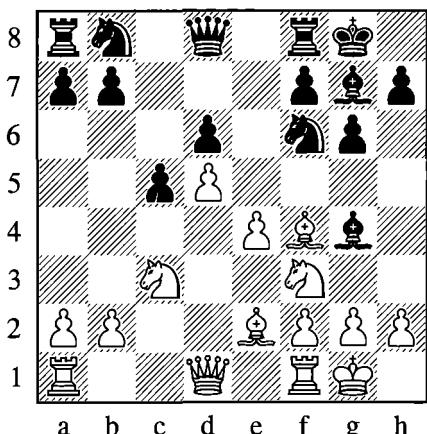
19...g5

It is worth breaking the pin, and White is hardly poised to land a knight on f5 here.

20. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7=$

Jaracz – Vaulin, Polanica Zdroj 1999.

B3) 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$



This is the main line and is the most challenging move.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

If Black wants to exchange this knight then he should do so immediately, as it might run away at any moment. That being said, he could consider 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ when 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 12. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ resembles the earlier variation A, and is likely to transpose directly as soon as the moves ...a6 and a2-a4 are played. By the way, I don't see a good reason for Black not to insert these moves, as without them he will have to be mindful of a knight or even queen coming to b5.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ a6 12.a4 $\mathbb{W}e7$

12... $\mathbb{W}c7$ has been played, but I like it less here than I did in variation B1, when we effectively had an extra tempo. One potential problem is the sharp approach with 13.e5!?, but even if White proceeds more quietly with 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, there is still an interesting plan available in 14.a5!? followed by $\mathbb{Q}fc1$ and a timely b2-b4 to cast doubt on the queen's position.

Another idea is:

12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

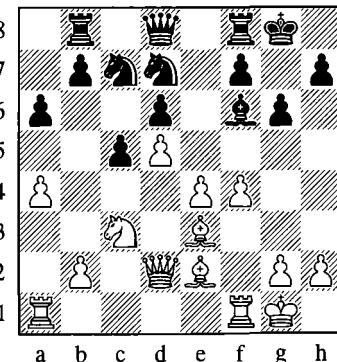
This move has been tested by some top players, but it is too passive for my liking.

13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

This is the most unpleasant move, although 14. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ also gives White an edge.

14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 17.f4±

Black is poorly placed to meet the following sacrificial breakthrough.



17... $\mathbb{E}e8$

17... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 18.e5 dxe5 19.f5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 20.d6 $\mathbb{W}a5$
 21.fxg6 hxg6 reaches a sharp position, but if White manages to find a couple of good moves he will get a big advantage: 22. $\mathbb{W}c2!$
 $\mathbb{Q}ef6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c4! \pm$ Woityra – Rupsys, e-mail 2004.

18.e5 dxe5

Now in Kuzmin – Simacek, Pardubice 2009, White should have continued in thematic style with:

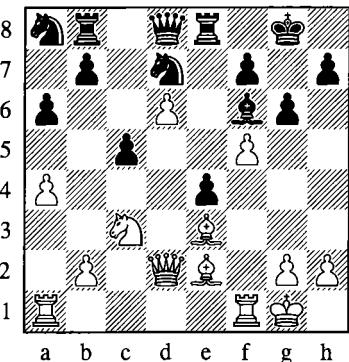
19.f5!N

A typical pawn sacrifice.

19...e4

19... $\mathbb{E}f8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 21.d6±

20.d6 $\mathbb{Q}a8$



21.a5!

Paralysing the knight and effectively forcing the following move.

21...b5 22.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}axb6$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xa6$ $\mathbb{E}a8$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xa8 \pm$

Material is equal and White has a strong initiative, with a powerful passed pawn and two great bishops.

13. $\mathbb{E}e1$

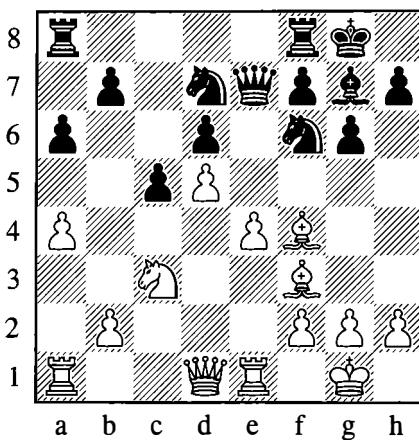
It is important to note that 13.e5 leads nowhere: 13...dxe5 14.d6 $\mathbb{W}e6$ 15. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}a7 =$ Browne – D. Gurevich, New York 1984.

13. $\mathbb{W}b3$ has also been tried, but Black can happily sacrifice a pawn with: 13... $\mathbb{Q}bd7!$

14. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{E}fb8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ (15... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5 \bar{\square}$) 16.a5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \bar{\square}$ Svetushkin – Foisor, Eforie Nord 2009.

13... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

Both sides have more or less completed development. Black's position is pretty fluid, and he may look to develop play in the centre and/or on either flank. Compared with some other Modern Benoni lines the position is relatively stable here, and White will have to try and improve his position gradually, perhaps with a view to exploiting his bishop pair later.



14.a5

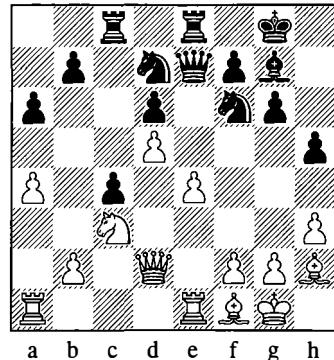
Lots of other moves have been played, and the position is generally of a non-forcing character. Therefore I will limit the coverage to a few of the more interesting and instructive examples I found.

14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ c4

The following game shows an interesting plan involving kingside play: 14... $\mathbb{E}f8$ 15.a5 h5! 16.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ g5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ g4 \Rightarrow Tukmakov – Spraggett, 1993.

Here is another example where Black combined kingside and queenside play: 14...h5 15.h3 (15.a5 can be compared with the main line.) 15...c4 16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}ac8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

$\mathbb{B}fe8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ Gual Pascual – Cramling, Barcelona 1989.

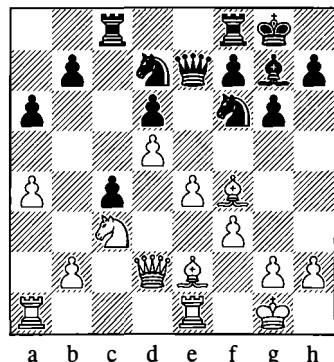


18... $\mathbb{Q}e5!N$ With the typical idea of sacrificing the c-pawn. 19.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ cxd3 21. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ Black has fair compensation, for example: 22.e5 dxe5 23.d6 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 24.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5=$

15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}ac8$ 16.f3N

I decided to examine this untested move.

16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17.h3 $\mathbb{Q}ge5$ was pleasant enough for Black in Boensch – Perenyi, Leipzig 1988.

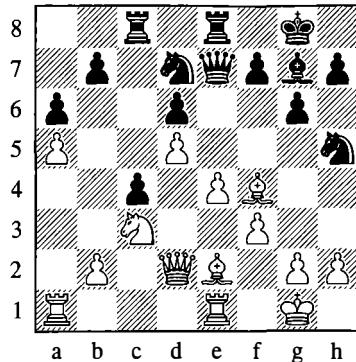


16... $\mathbb{B}fe8$

Here is another version of the aforementioned pawn sacrifice: 16... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 18.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ cxd3 20. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{B}fe8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{B}xc5\bar{=}$

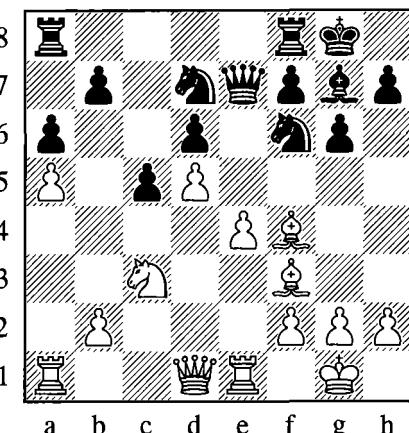
17.a5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$

Black chases the enemy bishop with a view to developing play on the dark squares. A possible continuation is:



18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f6 23. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xf4$ g5 25. $\mathbb{W}f2$ gxh4 $\bar{=}$

After the text move we must decide where to put the rooks. Another key question is what to do with the knight on f6, as we may wish to move it to open the long diagonal.



14... $\mathbb{B}ab8$

In this particular position I prefer to play for ...b5 rather than ...c4.

14... $\mathbb{B}fe8$

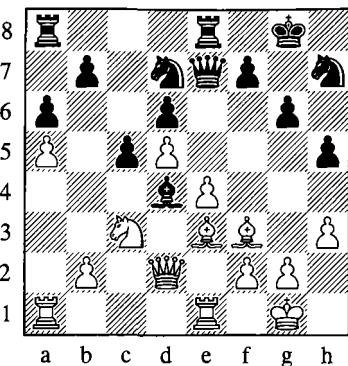
Of course playing in the centre is also not bad.

15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ h5

Initiating one of the typical plans in this position. The knight will retreat to h7 to

allow Black's other pieces to fight for the dark squares.

16.h3 ♜h7 17.♗d2 ♜d4 18.♗e3



18...♝e5! N

Fighting for the dark squares. I am less keen on the following three alternatives:

18...♞e5?! 19.♗d1 b5 20.axb6 ♜xb6

21.♗b3± Kononenko – Delchev, Solsones 2004.

18...♝f6 19.♗ad1 ♜xe3 20.♗xe3 ♜g5?

21.♗xh5! ♜f4 (21...gxh5 22.♗g3+–)

22.♗g4± Gupta – Girinath, Visakhapatnam 2006.

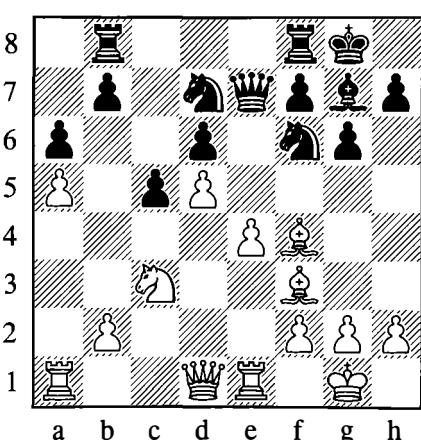
18...♞xe3N 19.♗xe3 ♜hf6±

19.♗ad1

19.♗d1 ♜hf6 20.♗c2 ♜xe3 21.♗xe3 h4 is also about equal.

19...♞xe3 20.♗xe3 ♜g5=

I see no major problems for Black.



15.♗a4

If Black gets to play ...b5 and recapture with the rook, then he can expect a good deal of activity on the b-file. Here are three examples demonstrating how Black can obtain easy play if White fails to prevent this.

15.♗d2 b5 16.axb6 ♜xb6 17.♗a2 ♜fb8= Roeder – Galje, Graz 1997.

15.♗c2 ♜e8 Before implementing the plan, Black carries out a typical manoeuvre. 16.♗e2 ♜c7 17.♗f1 b5 18.axb6 ♜xb6= Black had a good position in Vukic – Tringov, Borovo 1980.

15.♗e2 ♜e8 16.♗d2 ♜c7 17.♗g5 ♜f6 18.♗xf6 ♜xf6 19.♗ad1 b5= Hudak – Harvey, corr. 2009.

15...♞e5

A firmly-established knight on e5 is normally a sign of good health for the Benoni player.

16.♗e2!?

This is the most ambitious move, avoiding simplifications and daring Black to capture the e4-pawn.

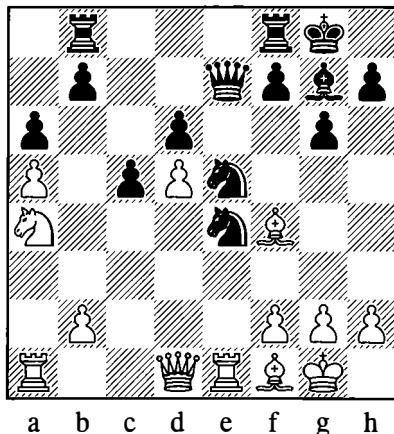
Several game have continued with 16.♗xe5 ♜xe5 but Black obviously has nothing to fear here. One example continued 17.♗b1 ♜d7 18.b4 ♜d4 19.♗e2 cxb4 20.♗ed1 ♜f6 21.♗g4 b5 22.axb6 ♜xb6 23.♗xb4 ♜xa4 24.♗xa4 and a draw was agreed in Browne – D. Gurevich, Estes Park 1985. Curiously, a year later Gurevich reached the same position with Black against a less formidable opponent, but that time he played on and won.

16...♞xe4!?

With this move Black drags his opponent into deep water, though it remains to be seen who is more likely to drown.

The more solid 16... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ is also quite playable, for instance: 17.f3 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ f5 19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ f4 20. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h4$ =

17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$



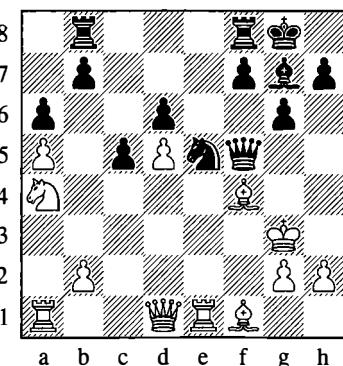
17...g5!?N

17...g5? White is more prepared for the open centre here. 18.f3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (18... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ does not help either: 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20.f4 $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}xe1$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xe1\pm$) 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $dxe5$ 20.d6 $\mathbb{W}e8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5\pm$

The one game on the database took an interesting course:

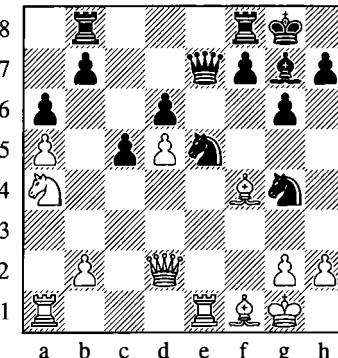
17... $\mathbb{Q}xf2$?! 18. $\mathbb{W}d2$

For better or worse, White should have taken the knight. After 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf2N$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}f5\infty$ Black has nothing forced, but White's pieces lack coordination and his king is a little vulnerable. Play may continue:



20. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 21.h4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ h5→ 18... $\mathbb{Q}fg4$

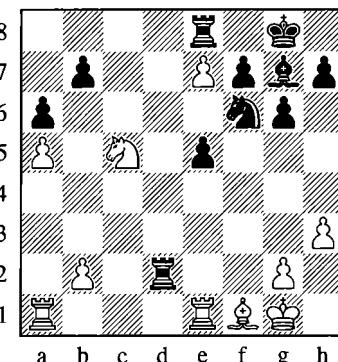
After 18... $\mathbb{Q}h3\uparrow$ 19.gxh3 $\mathbb{Q}f3\uparrow$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}xe1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}be8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}b6\rightleftarrows$ the endgame is unclear.



19.h3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $dxe5$ 21.d6 $\mathbb{Q}fd8!$ N

21... $\mathbb{W}e8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ was level in Geffroy – S. Kovacevic, Issy les Moulineaux 1999.

22. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$



24. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$

24... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$? $\mathbb{Q}h5\rightleftarrows$

24... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ e4

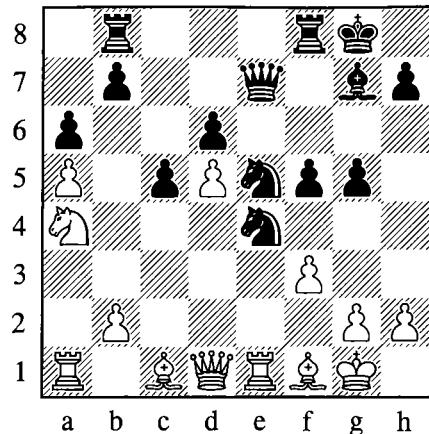
The b2-pawn will not escape.

26. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}c2$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}a7\bar{\tau}$

18. $\mathbb{Q}cl$ f5

Another idea is: 18... $\mathbb{Q}g6$?! 19. $\mathbb{W}c2$ f5 20.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21.fxe4 (21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}f7\rightleftarrows$) 21... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 22.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2\rightleftarrows$

19.f3

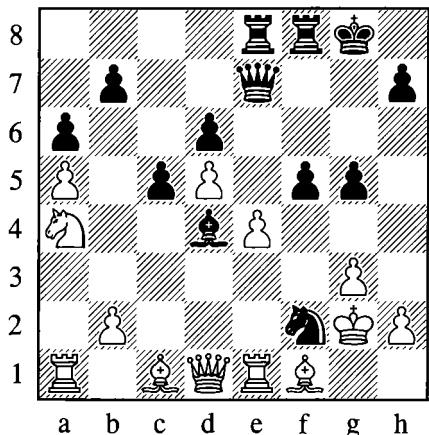


19...♝be8!

White must tread carefully now.

20.fxe4 ♝g4 21.g3 ♙d4† 22.♗g2 ♘f2

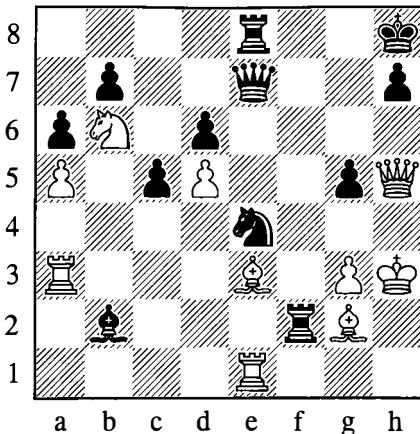
For the moment Black is down a bishop for a pawn, but just look at the difference between the two sets of pieces.



23.♗h5 f4

We could spend several pages analysing this position, but I will just present my main line which I believe represents best play on both sides.

**24.♕a3 ♘xe4 25.♘b6 fxg3 26.hxg3 ♜f2†
27.♘h3 ♜h8 28.♕e3 ♘xb2 29.♕g2**



29...g4†?!

29...♗xa3 should not change the final result:
30.♗xe4 ♕b4 (30...♗f7 31.♗g6 g4† 32.♗xg4
hxg6 33.♗xf2 ♜xe1 34.♗xel ♜f1† 35.♗h2
♗xe1=) 31.♗xf2 ♜xe1 32.♗xel ♜xe4 33.♗c3†
♗g8 34.♗xg5† ♜g6 35.♗xg6† hxg6 36.♗c4
♗e2 37.♗xd6 ♜e3 38.♗b2 ♜d3 39.♗e4 c4=

**30.♗xg4 ♜xg2 31.♗xg2 ♜xa3 32.♗h6 ♜b4
33.♗c8 ♜f6 34.♗xe4 ♜xe4 35.♗xe4 ♜xh6
36.♗e8† ♜g8 37.♗e7† ♜g8 38.♗xd6 ♜d2†=**

As often occurs, the wild complications eventually led to a draw after accurate play from both sides.

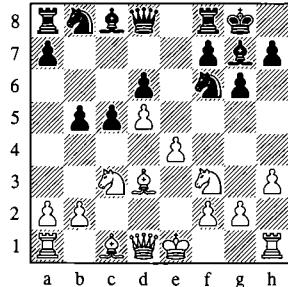
Conclusion

The ...♝g4 variation remains in good health. Compared with some other Benoni lines it is pretty solid, and you do not need to learn much theory in order to play it. At the same time there is scope to interpret the position in different ways, whether by manoeuvring for solid equality or conjuring up a tactical storm as we saw in the final part of the chapter.



e4 Systems

Modern Main Line



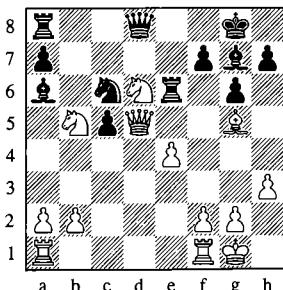
Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8.h3

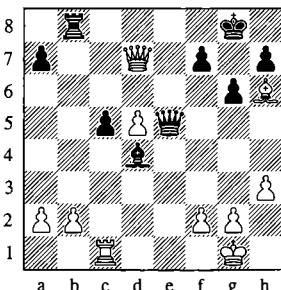
8...0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b5

A) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$	118
A1) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$	119
A2) 11.0-0	121
B) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}a5\uparrow$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$	
14. $\mathbb{Q}2c4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}axc8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e1$	123
B1) 18... $\mathbb{Q}d6$	125
B2) 18... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$	125

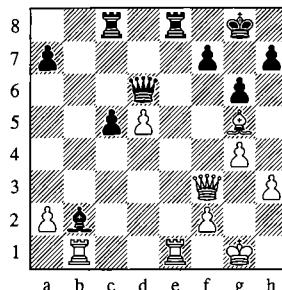
A1) after 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



B2) note to 20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$



B2) after 22.g4!?

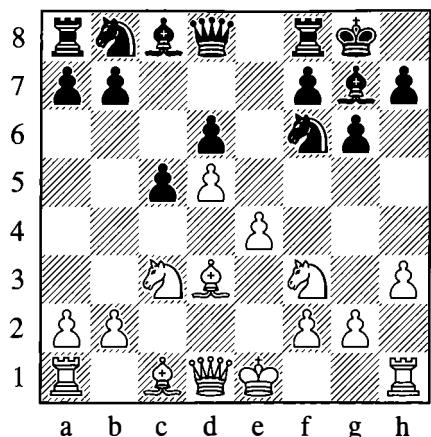


17... $\mathbb{Q}b8N$

24... $\mathbb{Q}xf2\uparrow!N$

22... $\mathbb{Q}xe1\uparrow!N$

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5
d6 6.e4 g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8.h3 0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



This is the main tabiya for what has become known as the Modern Main Line. As the name suggests, this variation has become one of White's most popular and highly-regarded weapons against the Benoni, so it is essential to be prepared for it. Before discussing the possible continuations from this position, I would first like to replay the opening moves in order to discuss a few move-order subtleties.

**1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5
d6 6.e4**

This is the usual move order; the nuances of 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 can be found on page 128 in the next chapter.

6...g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

There does not seem to be anything wrong with 7.h3 as an alternative move order, although if I was playing White, I think I would prefer to develop the bishop and overprotect the e4-pawn before spending a tempo on a pawn move.

7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a6? can be found on page 129 in the next chapter.

7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8.h3

8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ can be met safely by 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ – see variation C of Chapter 14, which can be found on page 189.

8...0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Finally we reach the main starting position of the Modern Main Line. Compared with the Classical Variation from the previous two chapters, White has developed his bishop to a more active square where it reinforces the e4-pawn. True, he has had to invest a tempo on h2-h3, but now the f3-knight will be secure for a long time. Black has several ways of responding, but in this chapter we will focus on the main theoretical line.

9...b5

This remains the most popular move, although it has some practical drawbacks, as Black needs to know a lot of theory just to reach a slightly inferior endgame offering few winning chances. Readers looking for a different approach may skip ahead to the next chapter beginning on page 127, where I discuss a number of other plans.

After the text move White's main options are

A) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ and B) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xb5=$

10.0-0 b4 is not dangerous for Black, for instance: 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ c4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4=$ Karpov – Andres Mendez, Buenos Aires 2001; 11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 13. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6=$ Z. Polgar – Gdanski, Adelaide 1988.) 11... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6=$ Malaniuk – Feygin, Nikolaev 1995.

A) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

This leads to a complicated game. Black should be able to win back his pawn, but he must take care and do it in the correct way.

10... $\mathbb{E}e8$

The following alternative may appear tempting, but it is inferior:

10... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$! 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{E}e8$

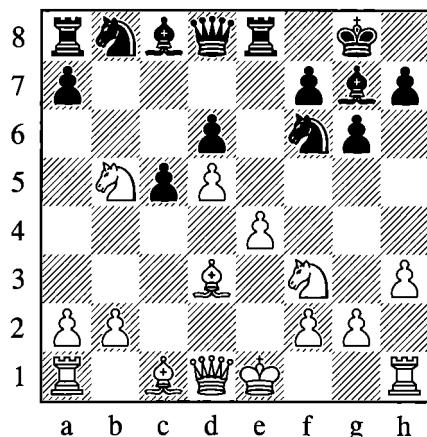
11... $\mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$ 13.bxc3 $\mathbb{E}e8$
 · 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{W}xc3\uparrow$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{W}c4$ 16.f3 f5 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{E}e1 \mathbb{Q}a6\pm$ Erdogan –
 Pantsulaia, Kocaeli 2002.

12. $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$

12...h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e6 \mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}xc3\uparrow$
 15.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xc3\uparrow$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{W}c4$ 17. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{W}xe2\uparrow$
 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe2 \mathbb{Q}a6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ fxe6 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg6 \mathbb{E}e7\pm$
 Baier – Lamy, email 2002.

13. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2 \mathbb{E}ab8$
 16.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$

Bern – Ha. Olafsson, corr. Sweden 1994.



From here White's most important options are A1) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ and A2) 11.0–0.

11. $\mathbb{Q}c3?$! $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ f5 13. $\mathbb{Q}fg5?$
 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}xb2!$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e6 \mathbb{W}h4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$
 $\mathbb{Q}c3\uparrow$ Del Prado Montoro – Izeta Txabarri, Ponferrada 1991.

11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ c4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc4 \mathbb{E}xe4\uparrow$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$
 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{Q}a6$ 15.a4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ gave Black nice compensation for a pawn in Lipinsky – Palkovi, Balatonbereny 1997.

A1) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

This tricky move can lead to heavy complications.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

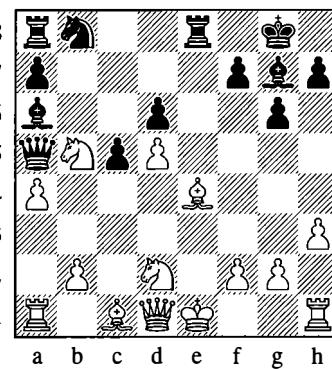
Sometimes the simplest moves are the best.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?!$

This leads to interesting play although I do not completely trust it.

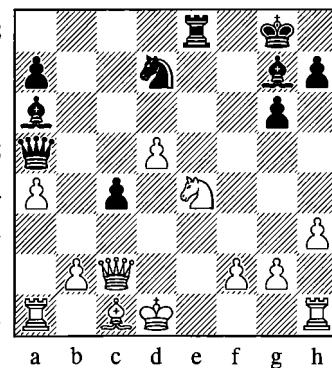
12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}a6$ 13.a4 $\mathbb{W}a5$

13...f5? 14.0–0 fxe4 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e1$
 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 17.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{E}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$
 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6\pm$ Nikolov – Rabrenovic, Obrenovac 2010.



14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6 \mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ f5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe8 \mathbb{E}xe8$
 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ fxe4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ c4?!

Vescovi – Jobava, Wijk aan Zee 2006.



19.f3?N

This looks like the only chance for White to fight for the advantage.

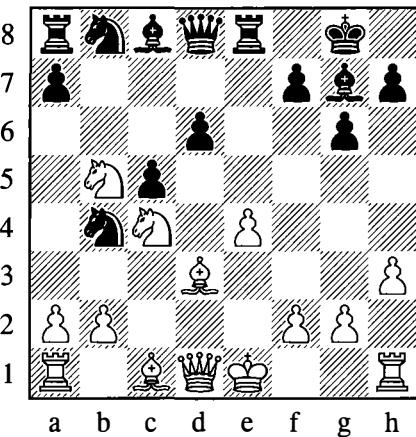
The game continued 19.♕c3 ♜xc3 20.♗xc3 ♘xd5† 21.♔d2 ♜c5 22.♗e1, and now 22...♝e4N would have forced 23.♗xe4 leading to equal chances.

19...♗xd5† 20.♗d2 ♗b7 21.♗a3 c3 22.♗xc3 ♘e5 23.♗e1 ♗a8 24.♗e4 ♔d3 25.♗e3 ♘xe4 26.♗xe4 ♗c8=

So maybe this line is playable for Black too, but I find the main move more convincing and less risky.

12.♗c4 ♜b4

12...♗e6!? seems playable too, for instance:
 13.♔e2 (13.0–0 is not dangerous: 13...♝b4 14.♔e2 ♗a6 15.♗c3 ♜d7 16.♔e3 ♜b6 17.♗xb6 ♗xb6 18.♗e1 ♗ae8 19.♗d2 ♘xe2 20.♗xe2= Shishkin – D. Kononenko, Kharkov 2007.) 13...♝b6 14.♗xd6 ♗a6 15.♔g4 f5 16.♔e2 ♜c6 17.♔e3 ♜d4 18.♔xd4 ♘xd4 19.♗b3 c4 20.♗xc4 ♗xb5 21.♗xb5 ♘xe4= Carpenito – Novak, e-mail 2008.



13.♗xd6

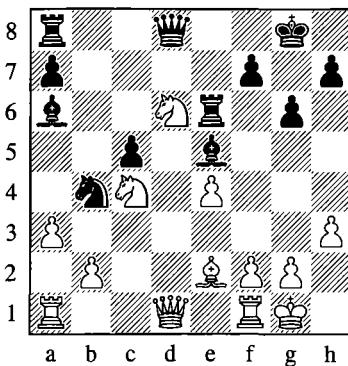
13.♔e2 ♗a6

A pawn sacrifice, which could be temporary. Another intriguing possibility is: 13...♗e2†!? (14...♗e5 is also quite playable.) 15.♗xe2 Lazarev – Cebalo, Cannes 1995, and now 15...♗e6N 16.a3 ♜c6 17.♔f4 a6 18.♗c3 ♜d4 19.♗d3 c4 would have given Black ongoing compensation.

14.♗bx6 ♗e6 15.♔f4 ♜d7

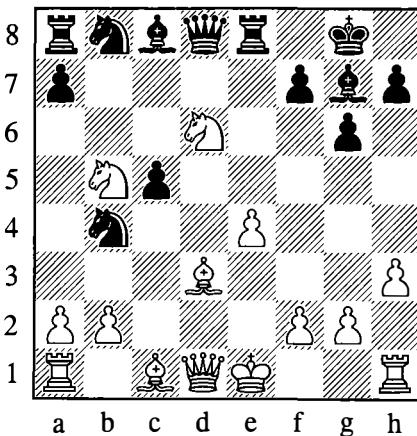
Black has good compensation, and in the following game he soon regained his pawn to equalize:

16.0–0 ♜e5 17.♔xe5 ♗xe5 18.a3



18...♗xd6 19.♗xd6 ♗xd6 20.axb4 ♗xd1 21.♔xd1 ♗xf1 22.♔xf1 cxb4 23.♔a4 a5 24.b3 ♘d8 25.♔e2 ♜c7

½–½ Hillarp Persson – Gdanski, Gothenburg 1997.

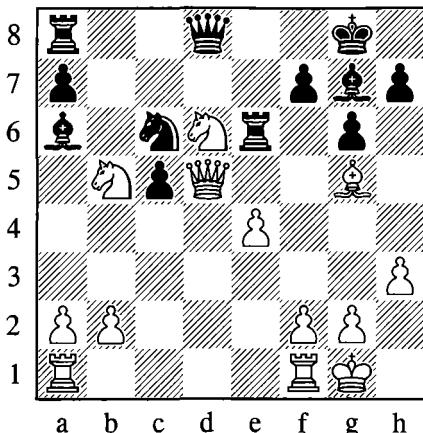


13...♗a6 14.0–0 ♜xd3 15.♗xd3

Compared with the previous note White has avoided losing time with his bishop, but he obviously has less stability on the light squares.

15...♗e6 16.♗d5 ♜c6 17.♔g5

This position occurred in Konca – Blokh, corr. 1992, and here I suggest the improvement:



17...Wb8N

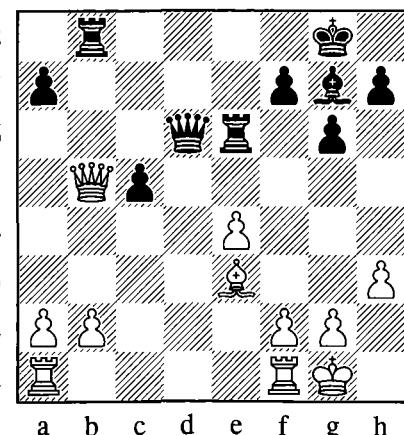
Simplifying to an endgame which should not be difficult to hold.

18.Wxc6

18.Wxc6 Wxb5 19.Qxb5 Wf8 20.Wc4 Qa5
 21.Wa4 We5 22.Qc7 Wxg5 23.Qxa8 Wf4
 24.Wc2 Qc4 25.Wxc4 Wf3 26.g3 Wxg3†
 27.fxg3 Wxg3†=

18...Qxb5 19.Wxb5 Wxd6 20.Qe3 Wb8!

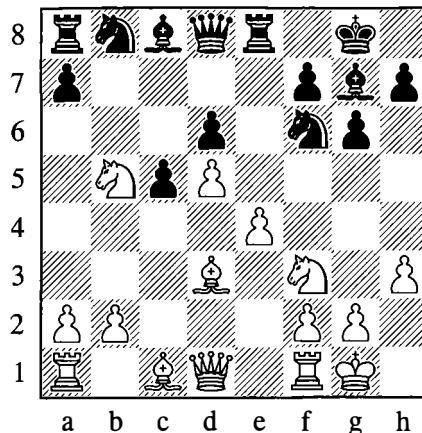
20...Wxe4 is playable, if slightly less accurate:
 21.Qxc5 Wb8 22.Wa5 Wc6±



21.Wxc5 Wxc5 22.Qxc5 Wxe4

Black is close to a draw.

A2) 11.0–0



Although the previous line is by no means bad, the text move has been a lot more popular.

11...Qxe4 12.Qe1

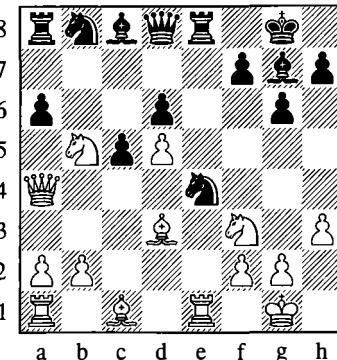
This is the main line although 12.Qxe4, 12.Wa4 and 12.Wb3 have all been tested by strong grandmasters.

12...a6 13.Qa3

13.Qxe4 does not test Black at all: 13...Wxe4 (13...Wxb5=) 14.Qxd6 Wb4 15.a3 Wxd6 16.axb4 cxb4 17.We2 Qb7= Guo – Zhang, China 2010.

More interesting is:

13.Wa4



13...Qd7!

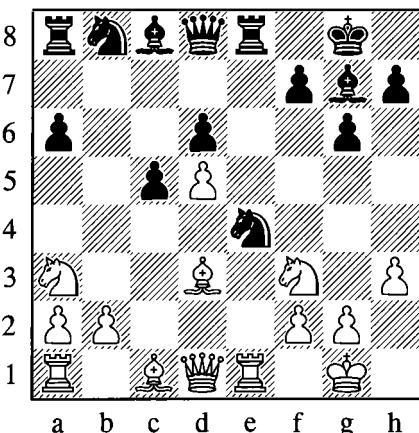
An important move! Black is developing his pieces with the help of tactical resources.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xe4$

15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $axb5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$
18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa2\#$ Schmidt – Myakutin, e-mail 2001.

15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $axb5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 18. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg7=$

Lobron – Topalov, Dortmund 1996.



13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

16. $\mathbb{W}a4$

16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}ef6$

19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ was balanced in Ki. Georgiev – Aroshidze, Balaguer 2009.

16... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

White is ahead in development, but Black has no weaknesses and should be able to catch up within a few moves.

17. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

Black is fine against other moves as well. Here are two brief examples:

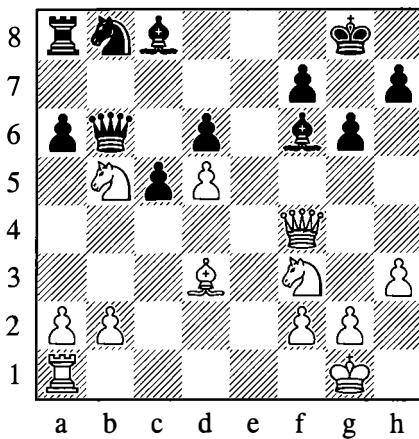
17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\rightleftharpoons$
Romanov – Hardicsay, e-mail 2002.

17. $\mathbb{Q}el$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$
20. $\mathbb{W}b3=$ McArthur – Jurca, e-mail 1999.

17... $\mathbb{W}b6$

Black has a second good option: 17... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $axb5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g5=$ Polak – Simacek, Decin 2009.

18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}f4$



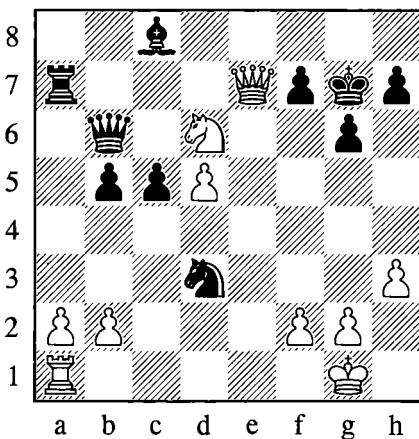
19... $axb5!$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

The knight will save his king now.

21. $\mathbb{W}e7$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$

Now we are heading for a practically forced draw.

22. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$

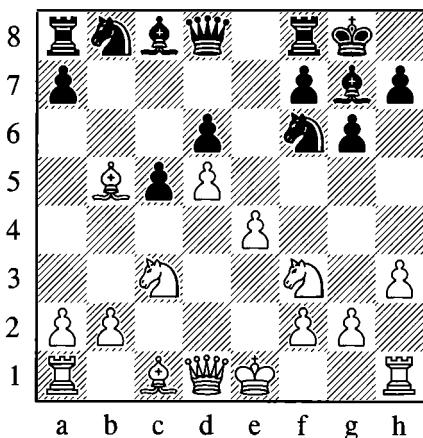


25.♕e8†

25.♕xc8?! ♜xe7 26.♕xb6 ♜b7 27.♕c8
♕xb2±

25...♛g8 26.♕f6† ♛g7 27.♕e8†=
Palliser – D. Kononenko, Plovdiv 2010.

B) 10.♗xb5

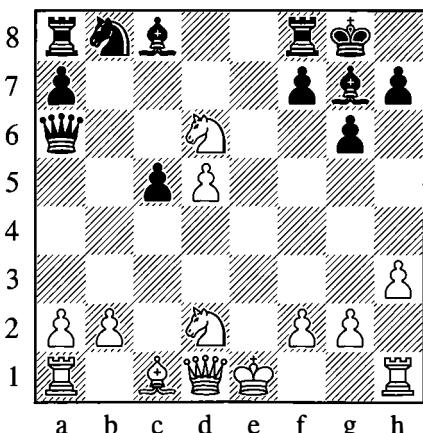


This leads almost by force to a famous endgame.

10...♕xe4 11.♕xe4 ♜a5† 12.♕fd2 ♜xb5

13.♕xd6 ♜a6

13...♜d3?! is worse: 14.♕c4 ♜xd1†
15.♕xd1 ♜a6 16.♕c2 ♜d7 17.♕f4± Epishin –
San Segundo Carrillo, New York 1990.



14.♕2c4 ♜d7

I prefer this over 14...♝d8 15.♕f4 ♜d7
16.0–0 ♜b6 17.♕xb6 ♜xb6 18.♕xc8 ♜axc8,
when the position can be compared with
15...♜b6 as mentioned in the notes to the
main line below.

15.0–0

To draw or not to draw – that is the question!

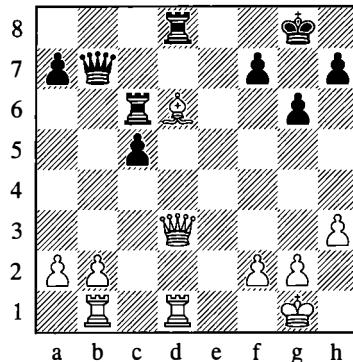
15...♜e5

I think this is the most precise move.

Many games have continued:

15...♜b6 16.♕xb6 ♜xb6 17.♕xc8 ♜axc8
18.♝b1 ♜fd8 19.♕f4 ♜b7 20.d6 ♜f8 21.♗d3
♗xd6 22.♗xd6 ♜c6 23.♗fd1

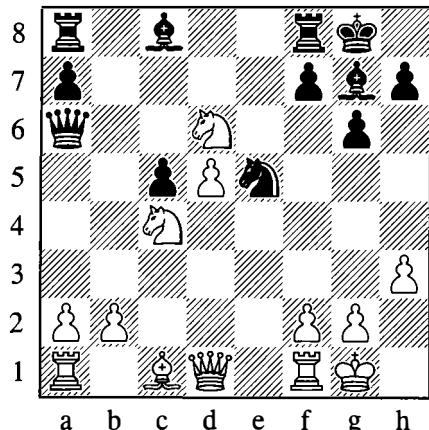
Black should be able to hold this, but it is
not my idea of a dream Benoni position,
especially if I happen to be facing a lower-
rated opponent.



23...♜cxd6

23...♜d7 24.♗a3 ♜xd6 25.♗xd6 ♜xd6
26.♗xa7 ♜e8 27.♗a5 ♜e2 28.♗c3 ♜b6
29.a4 c4 30.♗f1± reaches a different type
of endgame, but here too Black will have to
defend without having the slightest chance
to play for a win.
24.♗xd6 ♜xd6 25.♗xd6 c4 26.♗d2 c3 27.♗c2
♗e4 28.♗bc1 cxb2 29.♗xb2±

With two rooks against a queen, White can
press for a long time, although the majority of
games have been drawn from this position.

**16. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$** 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{W}xd6$

This leads to a position where White has many choices, none of which lead to an advantage.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ is also playable, for instance:

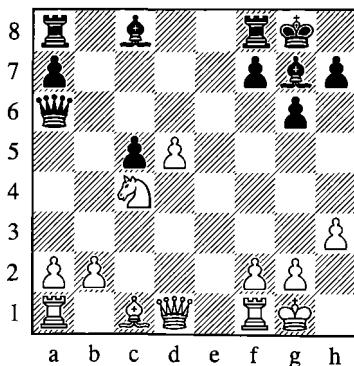
17. $\mathbb{Q}e4 \mathbb{Q}f5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc5 \mathbb{W}c4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}xb2$
 20. $g4 \mathbb{Q}xa1$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xa1 \mathbb{Q}xg4$ 22. $\mathbb{E}c1 \mathbb{W}e2$
 23. $\mathbb{Q}h6 f6$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf8 \mathbb{E}xf8$ 25. $hxg4 \mathbb{W}xg4\#$
 26. $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{W}h3\#$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}g1=$ Seres – Ovsejevitsch, Budapest 2003.

17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

17. $\mathbb{Q}c6 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}xc6$ 19. $dxc6 \mathbb{W}xc6$ was equal in Grabarczyk – Simacek, Wroclaw 2010.

17... $\mathbb{W}a6$

White must not be allowed to develop his queenside easily.

18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

18. $\mathbb{W}b3 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 19. $\mathbb{E}d1 \mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$
 Wang Yue – Gashimov, Kallithea 2008.

18. $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{Q}b7$ 19. $\mathbb{E}d1 \mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}c2?!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$
 Lenderman – Fernandez, Mesa 2009.

18... $\mathbb{E}b7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c2 \mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{E}d2 \mathbb{E}fd8=$
 Guramishvili – Gaponenko, St Petersburg 2009.

16... $\mathbb{E}axc8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{Q}xe5$

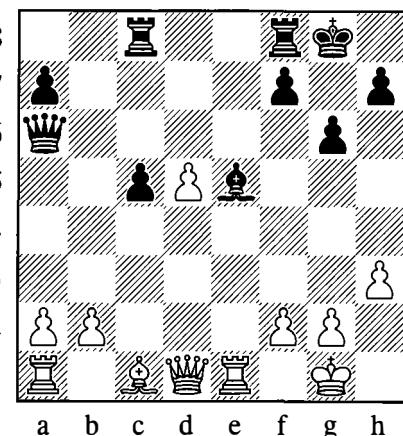
We have reached a typical scenario for the present variation. For the moment White has an extra pawn, but the weakness of the d5- and b2-pawns gives Black sufficient compensation.

18. $\mathbb{E}el$

There are many deviations, but the final result is almost always a draw. Here are a few examples:

18. $\mathbb{Q}h6 \mathbb{E}fd8=$ Batkovskytė – Anu, Kemer 2009.

18. $\mathbb{W}f3 \mathbb{E}fe8$ 19. $\mathbb{E}d1$ (19. $\mathbb{E}b1?$ $\mathbb{Q}h2\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xh2 \mathbb{W}xf1\#$) Andonovski – Jianu, Tivat 2011)
 19... $c4$ 20. $a4 \mathbb{W}b7$ 21. $\mathbb{E}a3 \mathbb{Q}xb2$ 22. $d6 \mathbb{W}xf3$ 23. $\mathbb{E}xf3 \mathbb{Q}xc1$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xc1 \mathbb{E}ed8$ 25. $\mathbb{E}f4=$
 Shengelia – Gashimov, Novi Sad 2009.



From this position Black has at least two good moves: **B1) 18... $\mathbb{W}d6$** and **B2) 18... $\mathbb{E}fe8$** .

18... $\mathbb{W}f6$ also seems decent, for instance:
 19. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ (19. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}g4$ h5 21. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{W}f5$
 22. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xe4$ $\mathbb{B}xd5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c4 25.f4
 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 26. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Polak – Chatalbashev,
 Heraklio 2007.) 19... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2\uparrow$
 21. $\mathbb{B}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xe1$ $\mathbb{B}xf8$ 23. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{W}d6$
 24.b3 h5 25. $\mathbb{W}e3$ a6 26. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xc5$
 $\mathbb{W}d2$ 28. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}d8$ 29. $\mathbb{W}xd2$ $\mathbb{B}xd2$ 30.a4 $\mathbb{B}b2$
 31. $\mathbb{B}c6$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Ki. Georgiev – Delchev, Sunny
 Beach 2009.

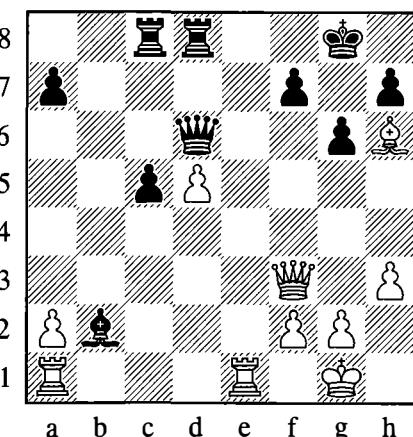
B1) 18... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h6$

19. $\mathbb{B}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xd5=$

19... $\mathbb{B}fd8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$

Now Black regains his pawn by force, and the chances of White claiming a notable positional advantage are minimal.

21. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$



22. $\mathbb{B}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$

23... $\mathbb{W}xd5??$ 24. $\mathbb{B}e8\uparrow!$ would be embarrassing.

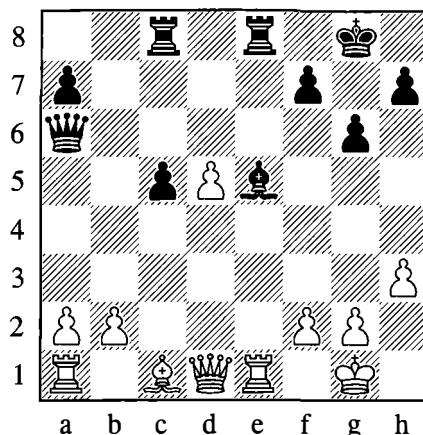
24. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ 25. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d4$

27. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 28. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{W}d4$ 29. $\mathbb{W}f3$

$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

This was the game Blagojevic – Nikolov, Valjevo 2011. So overall 18... $\mathbb{W}d6$ looks like a fully viable route to equality.

B2) 18... $\mathbb{B}fe8$



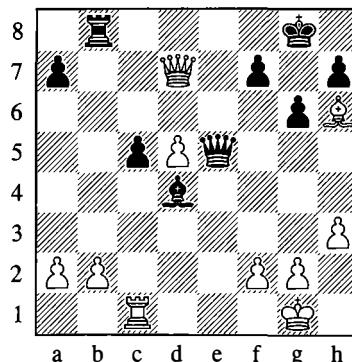
This move is slightly more complicated, but is still good enough to equalize.

19. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 20. $\mathbb{B}b1$

White has several other options.

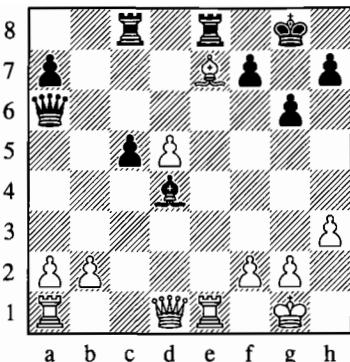
20. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 21. $\mathbb{B}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ led to yet another quick draw in the following game: 22. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{B}xe5$ $\mathbb{B}xe5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 25.d6 $\mathbb{B}d8$ 26. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{W}e2$ 27. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d2$ 28. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ Polak – Simacek, Czech Republic 2011.

20. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{B}e5$ 22. $\mathbb{B}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d7$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ occurred in Meier – Gashimov, Novi Sad 2009. Here Black's most convincing route to equality would have been:



24... $\mathbb{Q}xf2\uparrow!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $g5=$

Finally 20... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ forces Black to find (or know in advance) a nice idea:



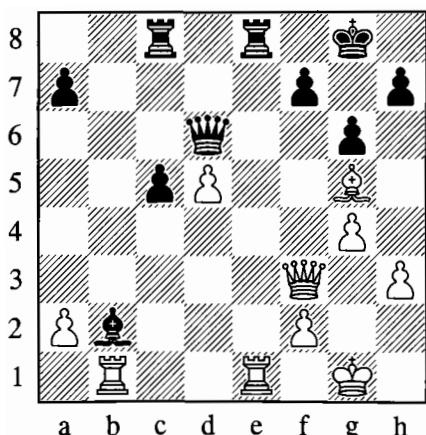
20... $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}f6\#$
23. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ 24.d6 $\mathbb{W}e3\#!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8-$
Brandhorst – Cardelli, e-mail 2007.

20... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f3$

21. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}h6$
 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 24.b3 c4 25.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}xf2\#!$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{W}h4\#$
27. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xh6=$ Mahnke – G. Mueller, e-mail 2007.

21... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 22.g4!?

This seems like White's best chance to create problems. Instead 22. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$
24. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8e$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}d3$ h5 $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ was another thrilling outcome in Blagojevic – Colovic, Porto Carras 2011.



22... $\mathbb{Q}xe1\#!$ N

It is important for Black to get this right.

I also considered 22... $\mathbb{Q}d4N$, but after 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ Black still has a way to go before he can claim equality.

The one game on the database continued in a more exciting manner than is typical for this line: 22... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}b7$ f6 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ A promising exchange sacrifice. 24... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 27. $\mathbb{W}c3=$ Acevedo Villalba – Soltau, e-mail 2008. Black managed to defend for a draw, but would you want to risk this position over the board?

23. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

This is much safer now that there is no white rook landing on b7.

24. $\mathbb{W}e4$ f6 25. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d8=$

Black will soon eliminate the d-pawn.

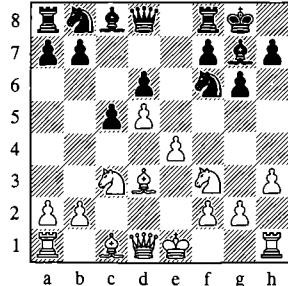
Conclusion

The 9...b5 line seems to be in good theoretical shape, but it has some practical disadvantages. One important point is that White has the freedom to choose between a complex game with 10. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ and a more simplified, technical battle with 10. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$. The latter case is a particular problem when one is facing a weaker opponent, or simply wishing to keep winning chances alive with the black pieces. Nevertheless, the bottom line is that Black's position is viable, so the readers can decide for themselves. Those who are not attracted to 9...b5 are invited to turn the page and check some of the ideas presented in the next chapter.



e4 Systems

Modern Main Line – without 9...b5



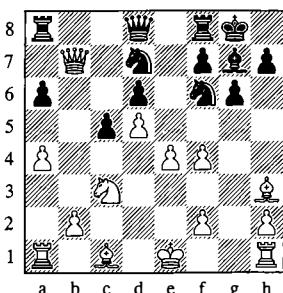
Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4

6...g6

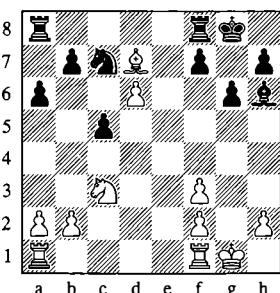
A) 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ a6!?	129
A1) 8.a4	129
A2) 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$!?	131
B) 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8.h3 0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$	134
B1) 9...a6	134
B2) 9... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 10.0–0 c4	135
B21) 11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$	135
B22) 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$	136
B3) 9... $\mathbb{Q}h5$!? 10.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$	138
B31) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$	140
B32) 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$	142

A1) after 13. $\mathbb{Q}h3$



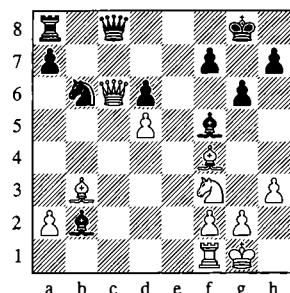
13...c4!N

A2) after 18.d6



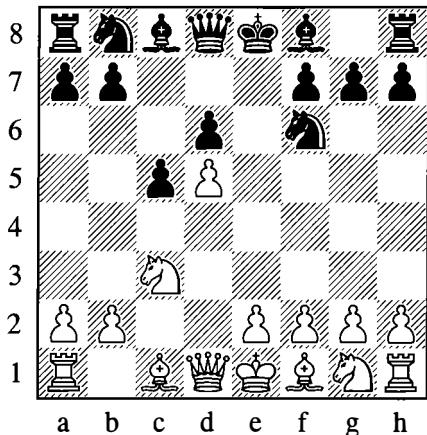
18... $\mathbb{Q}e8$!N

B22) note to 13... $\mathbb{W}b6$!?



21 ... $\mathbb{Q}a3$!N

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5
d6



Although the main 9...b5 line is fully playable, it will definitely not be to everyone's taste. Black has several ways of avoiding it, and in this chapter we will discuss a few of them. Our main topic will be Black's alternatives on move 9, although before then I will also mention some ways to bypass the Modern Main Line altogether in the event that White's move order allows it. That's why we are beginning the discussion at move 6: to pay attention to the different move orders and the possibilities to which each of them may lead.

6.e4

Sometimes White develops the knight first:
6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6

But already Black can choose to prevent the Modern Main Line if he wishes to.

7.h3

7.e4 transposes to line A on the following page.

Other $\mathbb{Q}f3$ -based systems which do not involve an early e2-e4 will be examined in Part 3 of the book.

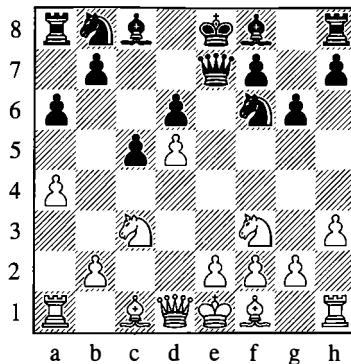
7...a6?

Note that 7... $\mathbb{W}e7$? does not prevent 8.e4 due to the standard trick: 8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$??

9. $\mathbb{W}a4 \dagger -$

8.a4 $\mathbb{W}e7$?

Now there is no check on a4, so Black really is restraining the e-pawn.

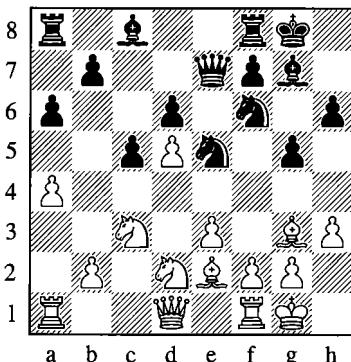


9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10.e3 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12.0-0
 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ transposes to line C1 of Chapter 16 on page 215.

9... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 10.e3 h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0-0
13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ g5 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15.0-0

15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16.0-0 occurred in Chernin – Milov, Biel 1994, and here I would suggest: 16... $\mathbb{Q}fe8N$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}fel$ g4 18.hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}fxg4$
19.a5 h5 \Rightarrow



15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$!

Black should usually play this move if he gets the opportunity in such positions. The bishop exerts a strong influence on the h7-b1 diagonal.

16.a5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 17.e4 $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 18.f4 gxsf4 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ f5
20.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5=$

F. Andersson – Ornstein, Sweden 2010.

6...g6

From here the chapter will be divided according to move order, beginning with **A) 7.Qf3** and ending with **B) 7.Qd3**. If White is looking to employ the Modern Main line, the second option is the more accurate in terms of limiting Black's options.

By the way, to repeat a point that was made in the previous chapter, 7.h3!? seems to be a valid way to initiate the Modern Main line, despite the fact that it appears slightly strange to move the h-pawn before either of the minor pieces on the kingside.

A) 7.Qf3

This gives Black the option of avoiding the Modern Main Line.

7...a6!?

7...Qg7 8.h3 0–0 9.Qd3 leads to the main tabiya, which will be discussed later under variation B.

It should be noted that 7...Qg4? is a mistake due to 8.Qa4! (8.Qb3?! is also promising) 8...Qd7 (8...Qbd7?! runs into 9.Qd2!± or 9.Qg1!±) 9.Qb3 and Black has problems. (Compare with Chapter 15 – here Black has lost a tempo by playing ...Qd7 in two moves.)

After the text move White may react with **A1) 8.a4** and **A2) 8.Qe2!?**.

In several games White has ignored the coming advance of the b-pawn, but I do not believe this should be dangerous:

8.Qf4 b5 reaches variation B of Chapter 16.

8.h3 b5 (8...Qg7 could be met by 9.a4) 9.Qd3 Qg7 10.0–0 0–0 11.Qf4 (11.a3 Qe8 12.Qe1 Qbd7 13.Qf4 Qb6 gave Black satisfactory play in Ibragimov – Batsanin, Novgorod 1997.)

11...Qe8 12.Qe1 Qa7 Developing the rook along the second rank is a useful option that the early ...b5 has made possible. 13.a3 Qae7 14.Qc1 Qb6 15.b4 Qbd7 16.Qd2 Qb7 17.Qe3 Qd8! Aleksandrov – Sherbakov, Kolkata 2002. Black's last move prevents a3-a4 and leaves him with roughly equal chances.

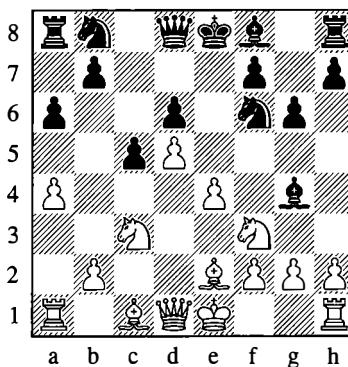
A1) 8.a4 Qg4!?

Black avoids the Modern Main Line and aims for a transposition to Chapter 8.

9.Qb3!?

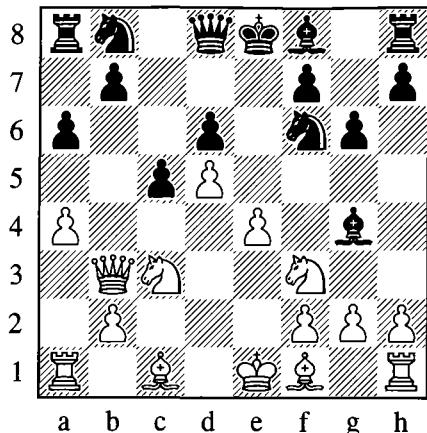
This is an attempt to punish Black's move order, but it turns out that White is risking just as much, if not more than his opponent.

The other move is 9.Qe2, when it is worth considering two paths for Black.



a) 9...Qg7 10.Qd2?! (10.0–0 leads to Chapter 8.) 10...Qxe2 11.Qxe2 0–0 12.Qc4 Qbd7?! 13.Qxd6 Qb6 Black has just about enough compensation for the missing pawn. I did some more analysis on this position, but it does not really belong in the book as there is no reason even to allow White this option in the first place.

b) 9...Qxf3! 10.Qxf3 Qbd7 is the best move order. After the coming ...Qg7 Black achieves the desired transposition to Chapter 8, without allowing the line noted above.



9...♞xf3

This move is forced, otherwise the knight will drop back to d2.

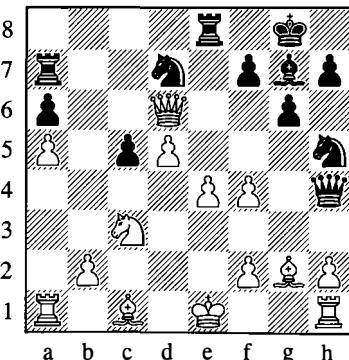
10.♘xb7 ♜bd7?!

This ambitious move is slightly risky, but it seems to work.

A safe alternative is 10...♞xg2 11.♞xg2 ♜bd7 12.0–0 ♜e7 13.f4 0–0 with equality, for instance: 14.e5!? dx5 15.d6 ♜xd6 16.♗xa8 ♘xa8 17.♗xa8 ♜xa8= Crouch – Emms, Millfield 2000.

11.gxf3 ♜g7 12.f4

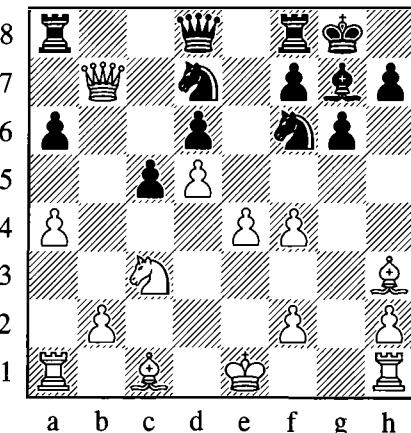
Grabbing a second pawn with 12.♗c6 0–0 13.♗xd6 seems excessively risky: 13...♞h5 14.f4 ♜e8 15.♗g2 ♜a7! 16.a5 ♘h4



17.♗e2? (17.♗c6N was the only move,

although even here after 17...♝xf4 18.♗xf4 ♜xf4 Black has a great initiative on the dark squares.) 17...♞c8! 18.e5 ♜f8+– Cordova – Smerdon, Turin (ol) 2006.

12...0–0 13.♗h3



13...c4!N

The black cavalry will soon be galloping with tremendous energy.

13...♝e8? 14.0–0 ♜e7 15.♗c6± left Black struggling for compensation in Khmelniker – Nikolov, Zürich 2010.

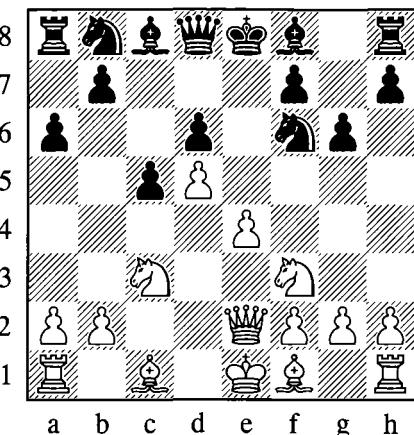
13...♗a5?N is quite playable, and after 14.e5 ♜ab8 15.♗a7 Black can immediately force a draw by attacking the queen. This would be a perfectly adequate improvement were it not for the fact that the text move gives Black chances to claim the advantage.

14.0–0 ♜c5 15.♗b4 ♜h5!

Having brought one knight to a fine square, Black improves the second one while also making room for the queen to join the action.

16.♗e2 ♜b3 17.♗b1 ♘h4↑

Black intends to exchange on c1 and take on f4, with a strong initiative on the dark squares.

A2) 8.♗e2!?

This aggressive move was introduced by Vladimir Epishin in 2004, and has since been tested by many strong players. It was also the subject of a *Dangerous Weapons* chapter by Chris Ward in 2008.

8...♝g4

According to the database this move has achieved a dismal score of less than 20%, but all of Black's losses have resulted from subsequent errors.

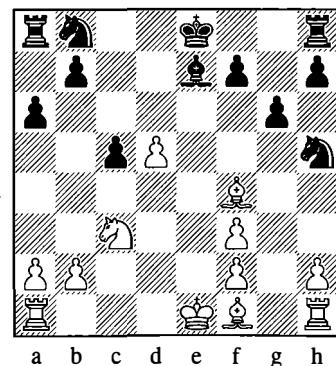
9.e5 ♘xf3 10.gxf3 dxe5 11.♗xe5† ♝e7

12.♗f4

This has almost always been played. Ward analyses the following alternative:

12.♗xe5† ♘xe7 13.♗f4 ♖h5!

It is important to challenge the strong bishop.

**14.♗c7**

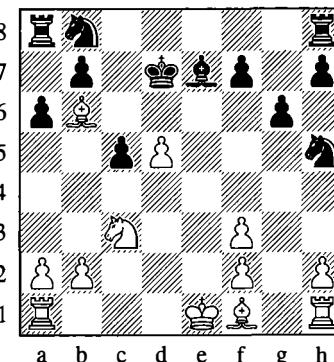
14.♗e3 should be met by: 14...f5! Black wants to put his bishop on d6 without fearing harassment from a knight on e4. 15.d6!? This seems to be the only way to cause problems. 15...♗xd6 16.0–0–0 ♘e5 17.♗c4 ♖d7 18.♗f7†? ♘xf7 19.♗xd7† ♘e6 20.♗xb7 ♘ab8 Ward evaluates the position is roughly equal.

14...♝d7

14...♝d7 15.d6 favours White according to Ward.

15.♗b6

15.♗g3 can be met by 15...f5! when Ward points out the following line: 16.♗a4? f4! 17.♗b6† ♘d6 18.♗xa8 ♖d7†

**15...♝d6!**

Black can get away with this bold method of development.

16.0–0–0

16.♗e4† ♘xd5 17.0–0–0† ♘c6 gives White nothing – Ward.

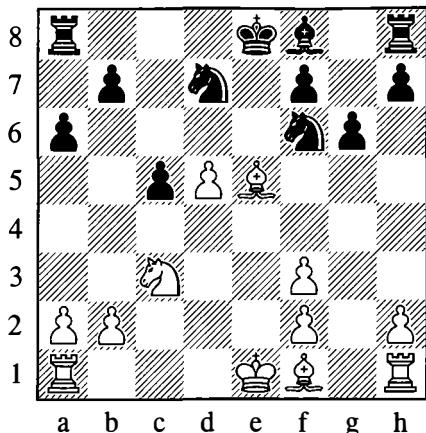
16...f5

Black is ready to complete development with ...♝d7, and the following attempt to invade on the e6-square backfires:

17.♗e1? ♘g5† 18.♗c2 ♖f4†

Ward mentions that Black has nice coordination, but I would go further and claim a clear positional advantage.

12...♗xe5† 13.♗xe5 ♖bd7



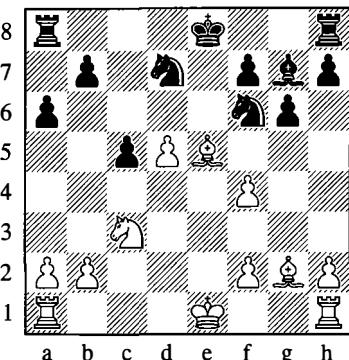
14.♗c7

Keeping the bishop is more important than improving White's pawn structure, as shown by the following line:

14.f4 ♘g7!

14...♘h6 15.♗h3 0-0 16.0-0 b5!? 17.♗ad1 ♘a7 18.♗fe1 ♘h5! 19.♗d6 ♘xf4! 20.♗xd7 ♘xd7 21.♗xf8 ♘xf8 gave Black some compensation for the exchange in Rowson – Ward, Douglas 2005, but I find the text move more convincing.

15.♗g2



15...♘xe5!

15...0-0? 16.0-0 ♘h5 17.♗d6! was better for White in Epishin – S. Kovacevic, Seville 2005.

16.fxe5 ♘h5 17.0-0 ♘f4!

It is crucial to prevent f2-f4.

18.♗ae1 0-0-0

The strength of White's central pawns is largely just optical, and he had to play well to draw in Epishin – Degraeve, Bad Wiessee 2006.

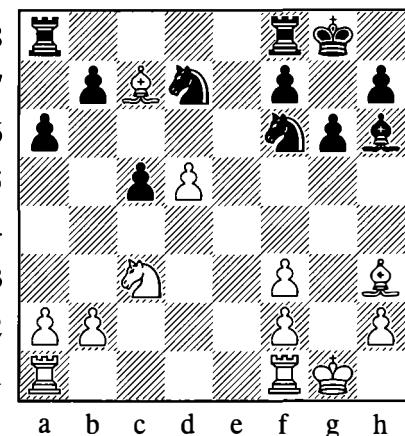
14...♗h6

Compared with the previous note, here it is useful to prevent long castling.

15.♗h3 0-0

Ward points out that the attempt to block the light-squared bishop with 15...♗h5 16.0-0 f5 can be met by 17.♗fe1† ♘f7 18.d6! when the bishop is poised to cause trouble via f1 and c4.

16.0-0



16...♗e8!

This move was played in 2010 in a game contested between two 2100-rated players. Despite the relative anonymity of the players, the idea seems to have rescued what previously appeared to be quite a bleak position for Black.

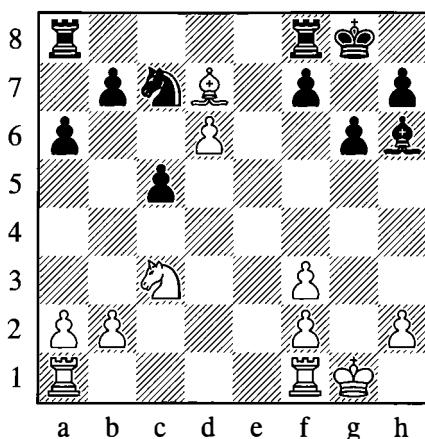
Previously 16...b5 and 16...♗fe8 have been tried, but neither of those moves fights against White's main trump cards: the passed d-pawn and the powerful bishops.

17.♗xd7

17.d6N f5 ensures Black of a decent position by shutting the enemy bishop out of play.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 18.d6

Here I offer an improvement.



18... $\mathbb{Q}e8!N$

The game continued 18... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$ and now in Pettersson – Janse, Lund 2010, White could have won an exchange with 19.dxc7N $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$, although Black retains some drawing chances.

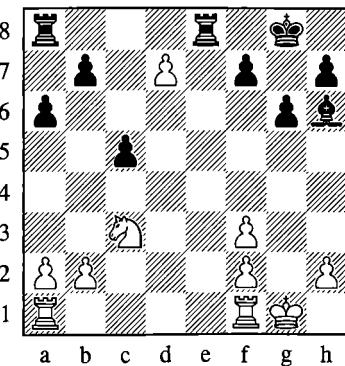
However, 18... $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$ N 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ axb5 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7\#$ is a valid alternative which the reader may wish to investigate.

19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

The alternative is:

19. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ $\mathbb{Q}fxe8$ 20.d7

20. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$



20... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Of course Black must avoid the trick 20... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$

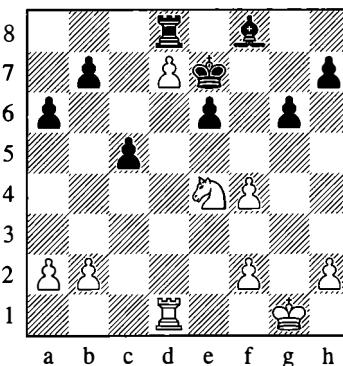
21. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 25.f4

25.b3 e5! 26. $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$

25... $\mathbb{Q}e7?!$

Black forces the play with a temporary pawn sacrifice.

If he wishes to keep more tension in the position, both 25...c4∞ and 25...b5∞ may be considered.



26. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ b6 27. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$

27. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xd7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$

27... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d2=$

White's extra pawn is meaningless and the game is virtually certain to end in a draw.

19... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$

20. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ c4 intending ...f5 is at least equal for Black.

20. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}d2\#$ also turns out well for the second player.

20... $\mathbb{Q}fxe8$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ b6

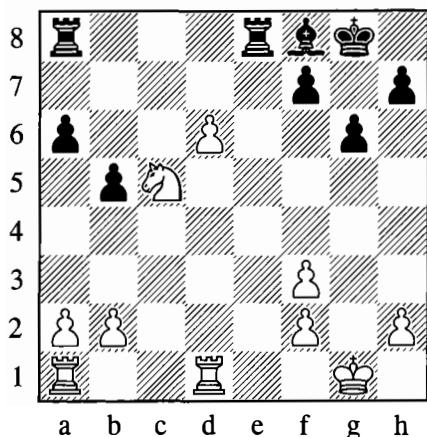
Black is temporarily a pawn down, but the d-pawn will fall soon enough.

22. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{E}ad8$ 23. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ f5 gives us no problems.

22...b5 23. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 24. $\mathbb{E}fd1$

24. $\mathbb{Q}d7$ $\mathbb{E}e6$ wins back the pawn by force.



24... $\mathbb{E}ed8$ 25.a4!

If Black is allowed to capture on d6 with impunity, he will have chances to claim an advantage thanks to his superior minor piece and White's weak kingside pawns. Therefore White should attack the queenside to ensure his own safety.

25...bxa4 26. $\mathbb{E}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 27. $\mathbb{E}ad4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 28. $\mathbb{E}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$

Black will restore material equality shortly, but with only kingside pawns remaining, there is little chance of making his better pawn structure count for anything.

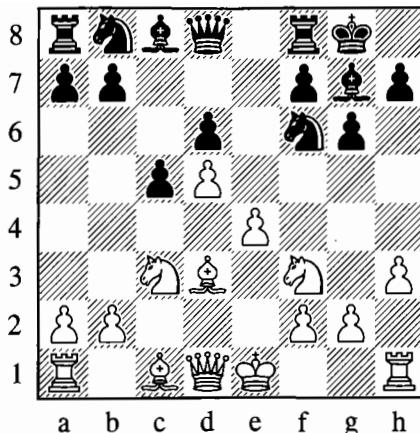
B) 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

This is a more accurate way for White to initiate his set-up. Pins on g4 will not be permitted.

7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

This time 7...a6 8.a4 does not give Black any special options, and the likely outcome is a transposition to line B1.

8.h3 0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



From here we will investigate B1) 9...a6, B2) 9... $\mathbb{E}e8$ and B3) 9... $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$.

B1) 9...a6

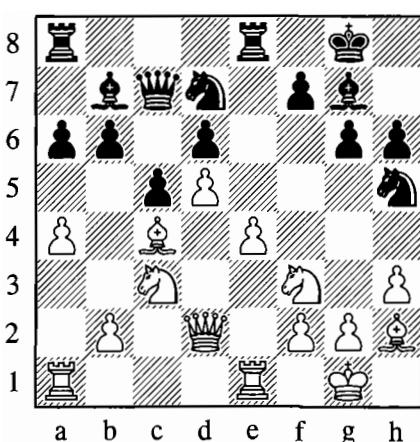
Standard Benoni development is playable, but I think it is too passive. More than a thousand games have been played from here, so I will just mention a few key examples to illustrate the character of the play.

10.a4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11.0-0 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}el$ b6

13... $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. e5 dx5 18. d6 $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. a5± Dreev – Malakhov, Villarrobledo 2007.

14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ h6

Black's position is solid but passive.



17.♗ad1

17.g4 gives Black some chances to obtain counterplay on the kingside: 17...♝hf6 18.♗ad1 h5 19.g5 ♐h7 20.♕g3 ♕e7 21.♗e2 ♜ae8 22.♗de1 ♜c8 23.♗h2 b5= 24.e5?! h4 25.♗f4 ♐xe5 26.♗xe5 ♜d7! White was in trouble in Onischuk – Nakamura, San Diego 2006.

17...♝h7 18.♗c2 ♕e7 19.♗e2 ♜g8 20.♗d2 ♜hf6 21.♗c4

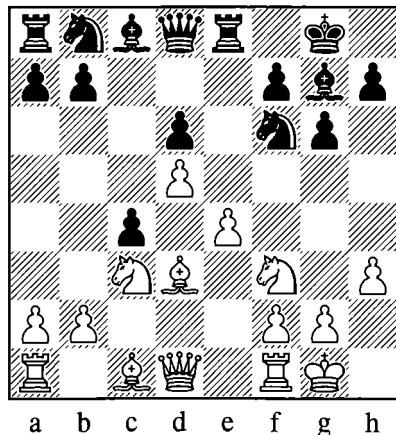
White had a considerable advantage in Jakovenko – Gashimov, Sochi 2008.

B2) 9...♝e8

This leads more interesting play than the previous line.

10.0–0

10.♗g5 has not been played in many games, but it immediately transposes to a position that has been reached many more times via other move orders, most notably the King's Indian where White plays h2-h3 and ♘g5, and Black responds with ...c5. For more details, see line D on page 191, where the position is reached by the move order 9.♗g5 ♜e8 10.♗f3.

10...c4

Other moves are likely to lead to similar play as in variation B1, but the text move is more interesting. White can react with **B21) 11.♗c2** or **B22) 11.♗xc4**.

B21) 11.♗c2

This does not cause many problems for Black.

11...b5 12.a3

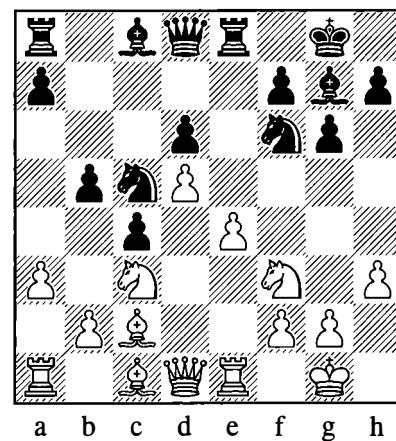
Already we can see a considerable difference from the previous variation B1. Black's queenside play is well underway and White has had to spend a tempo on a purely defensive move.

12...♝bd7

12...a6 is playable too, but why spend time defending a pawn when it is not yet necessary?

13.♗e1 ♜c5

The pressure against the e4-pawn enables Black to maintain the indirect defence of b5.

**14.♗f4**

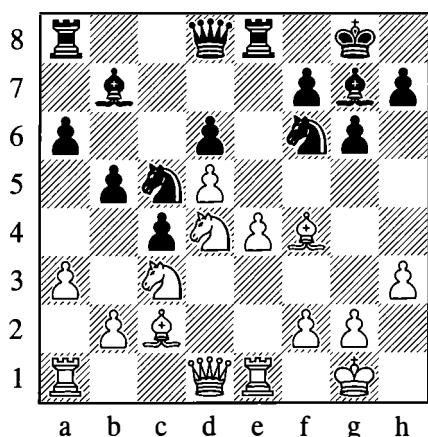
Another example continued: 14.♗g5 ♜b6 15.e5 Perhaps White should play more patiently, in which case the game will resemble the main line below. 15...dxe5 16.♗xe5 ♜b7 17.♗f3 h6 18.♗h4 ♜cd7= 19.♗g3? ♜xe5 20.♗xe5 ♜ad8† Rusev – Cvitan, Zadar 2008.

14...♝b7 15.♞d4

Black has a good position and can arrange his pieces in a few different ways.

15...a6?!

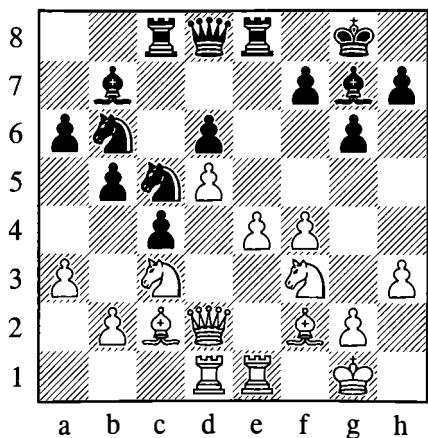
15...♝b6 looks natural but gives White the option of 16.♞c6?!?, when 16...♛xc6 17.dxc6 ♜e6 18.b4 cxb3 19.♛xb3 ♝xb3 20.♝xb3 ♜xc6 21.♝a1 ♜e8 22.♝xb5 ♜xb5 23.♝xb5 ♜xe4 simplified to an equal endgame in Ki. Georgiev – Chatalbashev, Blagoevgrad 2010.



16.♝d2

Now 16.♞c6?! ♜c7 achieves nothing for White.

16...♝b6 17.♝ad1 ♝fd7 18.♝e3 ♜ac8 19.f4 ♜d8 20.♝f2 ♜b6 21.♝f3



21...♝d3!?

A typical sacrifice for the Benoni. Black will get the c4-square for his knight which, along with the combined power of the bishop on g7 and rook on c8, will ensure a powerful initiative.

22.♝xd3 cxd3 23.♛c1 a5 24.♛a1 b4 25.axb4 axb4 26.♝a4 ♞c4 27.♝b1? ♜a5+

Rusev – Quillan, Sunny Beach 2011.

B22) 11.♛xc4

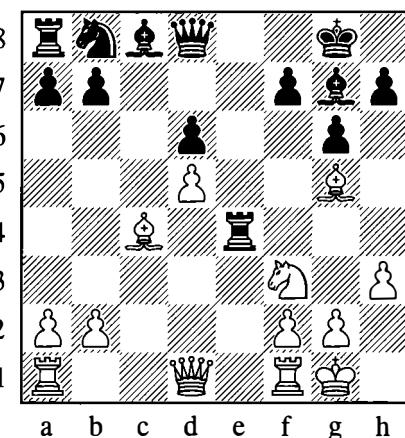
This move is more challenging.

11...♝xe4 12.♝xe4 ♜xe4

Black should be careful here, as the position is more open and White has the better development.

13.♝g5

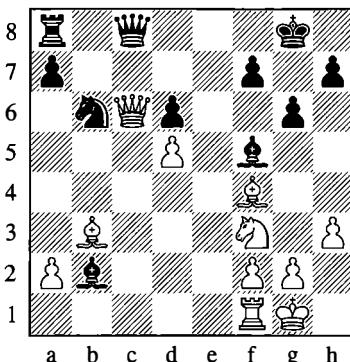
The other option for White is: 13.♞d3 ♜e8 14.♝g5 ♜a5 15.♝e1 ♜d7 16.♝xe8† ♛xe8 17.♝e1 ♜xe1† 18.♝xe1 ♜d7= Notkin – Totsky, Moscow 1995.



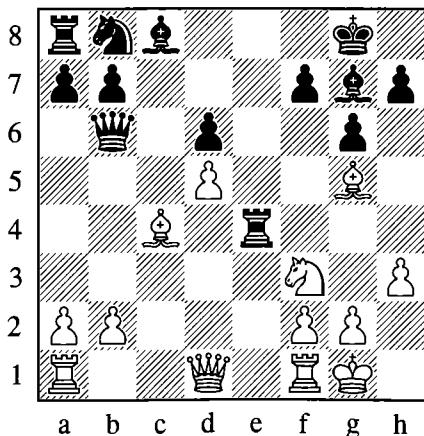
13...♝b6?!

This is the move I would ideally like to play, but I was unable to make it work. Still, I have made it the main line as it is the most principled attempt to obtain an active position.

13... $\mathbb{W}f8!$? seems objectively better, and in the following game I found a nice improvement to neutralize the pressure: 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}b3$ Now Black has to make a temporary pawn sacrifice. 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{E}xe8$ $\mathbb{W}xe8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xb7$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ Stoever – Van Seben, e-mail 2004.



21... $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ N This move saves the day for Black. 22. $\mathbb{E}el$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xc8\#$ $\mathbb{E}xc8=$ Despite the satisfactory outcome of this particular line, putting the queen on f8 does not seem like a pleasant way to conduct the game. If this is the best Black can do, then I would rather play a different line entirely. Besides, we have not even mentioned potential improvements for White in the above game.



14. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$

White must be precise if he is to turn his dynamic advantage into something tangible. This move forces the rook back while defending the bishop and preparing to deploy the knight on a more favourable square.

After 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}el$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ Black has few problems, and the position can be compared with the following line.

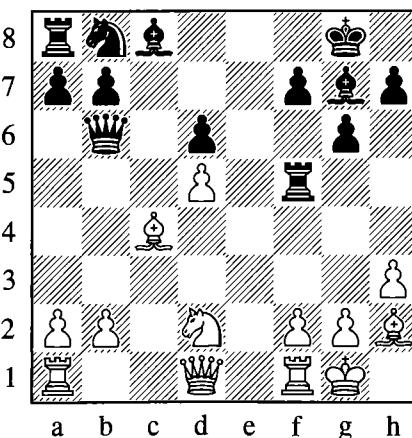
14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{E}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 17. $\mathbb{E}el$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ Black has managed to develop his pieces and is close to equalizing the game. 18. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ Gavrilovic – Palosevic, Serbia 2005. 20... $\mathbb{W}a5N=$

14... $\mathbb{E}e5$

14... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{E}el$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$ Annakov – Totsky, Russia 1995.

15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{E}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}h2$

We have been following the game Nava Baro – Migliorini, e-mail 2002. Black is under some pressure here; his rook is oddly placed and g2-g4 could be awkward at some point. I tried, unsuccessfully, to rescue the position with the following idea:



16... $\mathbb{Q}e5!?$ N 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ is nothing special for White.

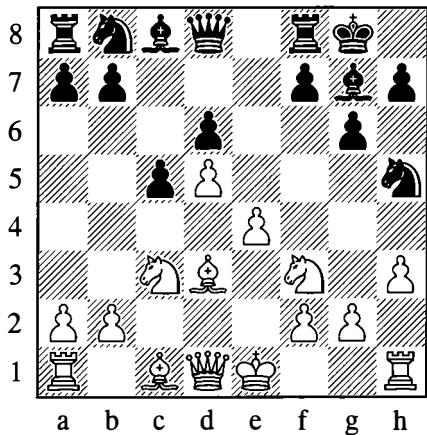
17... $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$

Another precise move, vacating the c4-square for the knight and forcing Black to waste additional time.

18... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 19. $\mathfrak{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d2\pm$

This would be absolutely no fun to play for Black. The story so far has been less than inspiring, so let's see if things will improve in the final section of the chapter.

B3) 9... $\mathfrak{Q}h5!?$



This move was recommended by John Watson in his 2001 book, and has since become a common guest in tournaments. The point of the knight move is to prevent $\mathfrak{Q}f4$ and prepare ... $\mathfrak{Q}d7-e5$ to exchange a pair of knights. Later Black may aim to take control of the dark squares with moves like ... $\mathbb{W}f6$ or ... $\mathbb{W}h4$.

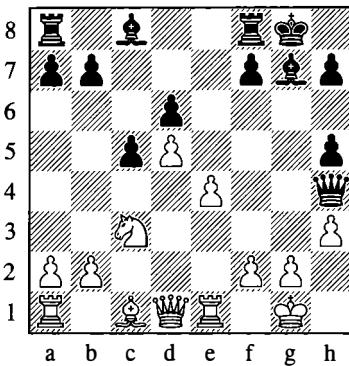
By the way, in discussing the ... $\mathfrak{Q}h5$ plan I should also mention a system recommended by Chris Ward in a *Dangerous Weapons* book, whereby Black puts the knight on h5 before castling. This idea definitely warrants consideration but I decided not to cover it here, partly to avoid duplicating another author, and also because I believe White has a route to a slight plus. So instead I will cover the ... $\mathfrak{Q}h5$ system in conjunction with castling, and leave

it to the reader to carry out his own research on the delayed-castling approach if he wishes.

10.0-0 $\mathfrak{Q}d7$ 11. $\mathfrak{Q}g5$

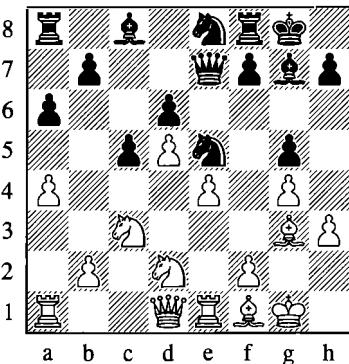
This natural move is the main line. Alternatives are unlikely to trouble Black:

11. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathfrak{Q}e5$ 12. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $\mathfrak{Q}xf3\#$ 13. $\mathbb{E}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}h4$
14. $\mathfrak{Q}xh5$ $gxh5$



15. $\mathbb{W}d2$ (15. $\mathfrak{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathfrak{Q}h6$ $\mathfrak{Q}xh3!$ works out well for Black, as Watson demonstrates.)
15... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathfrak{Q}d7=$ Merbis – Langedijk, Haarlem 2005.

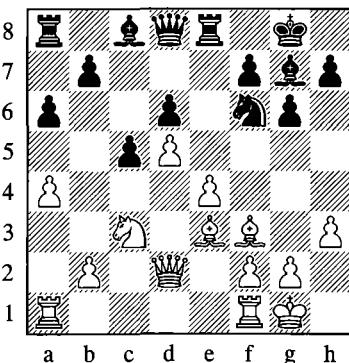
11.g4 gains time but weakens the kingside:
11... $\mathfrak{Q}hf6$ 12. $\mathfrak{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathfrak{Q}e8$ (13... $h5!?$)
14. $\mathfrak{Q}f1$ a6 15.a4 $\mathfrak{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathfrak{Q}d2$ g5 17. $\mathfrak{Q}g3$



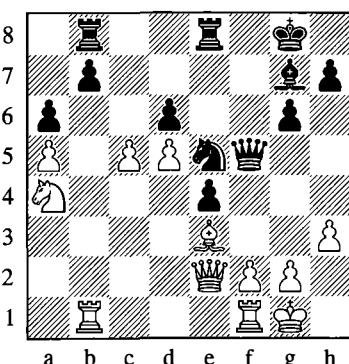
This was Kanko – Kosmo, Helsinki 2002, and now after 17... $\mathfrak{Q}c7\#N$ Black intends ... $\mathfrak{Q}d7$ and ...b5 with counterplay. If White blocks the

queenside with a4-a5, the knight on c7 can go to b5 and later d4.

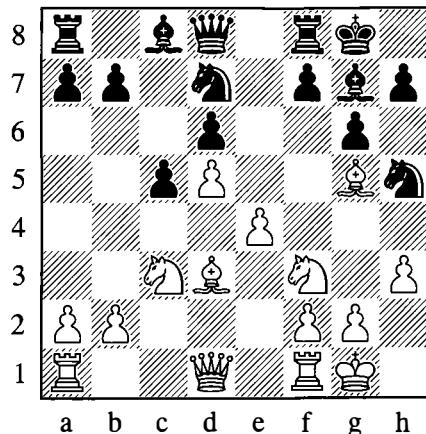
11.♕e3 allows Black to carry out the intended knight exchange, which is the main idea behind putting the knight on h5. 11...a6 12.a4 ♜e8 13.♗d2 ♜e5 14.♕e2 ♜xf3† 15.♕xf3 ♜f6= The knight carried out his duty so now he can go back. The position is balanced and it is worth seeing the rest of the game.



16.a5 ♜d7 17.♕a4 ♜b8 18.♗ab1 f5 19.b4 fxe4 20.♕g4?! (20.♕e2N cxb4 21.♗xb4 ♜e5=) 20...♜e5 21.♕xc8 ♜xc8† 22.♗e2 ♜f5 23.bxc5?



And now, almost out of nowhere, Black is winning. 23...♞f3†! The knight is untouchable and the white king cannot be saved. 24.♔h1 ♜e5 25.g3 (25.gxf3 ♜h5†) 25...♜h5 26.h4 ♜g4 Vasilev – Chatalbashev, Calvi 2004.



11...♞f6

It is not only the knights that Black will be happy to exchange. If the bishops come off then he will have chances to exploit the dark squares, especially with the queen coming to f6.

12.♕e3

12.♕xf6 does not seem to have been tested, and after 12...♝xf6 Black has a comfortable position, thanks to his active queen and ideas of ...♞f4 and/or ...♝e5 coming at some point in the future.

White's other important option is:

12.♔h6 ♜g7

12...♜e8 is also playable. One game continued: 13.♗d2 a6 14.a4 ♜e5 15.♕e2 ♜xf3† 16.♕xf3 ♜g7 17.a5 b5 18.axb6 ♜xb6 and White had a small advantage at best, Makovsky – Donnelly, corr. 2004.

13.♗d2

13.♗g5 ♜f6= repeats the position.

13.♗xg7 occurred in Fries Nielsen – Maus, Germany 1989, and here Black evidently should have recaptured with the king: 13...♞xg7N 14.♗d2 ♜f6 15.♕e2 ♜e8 According to Watson Black has a reasonable game, with ideas such as ...b5 and ...♝e5 on the agenda.

13...a6

13... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5!$? gave White good chances in Heigl – Beyer, corr. 1995.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$

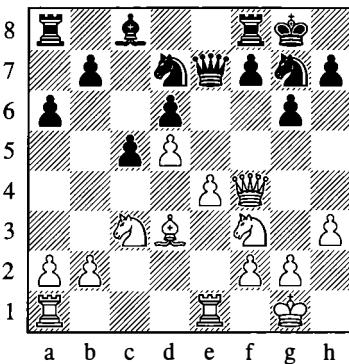
14.a4 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}f6=$ is pleasant for Black without any $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ideas to worry about.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$

14... $\mathbb{Q}xg7!?$ N 15.a4 $\mathbb{W}f6$ looks sensible.

15. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$

Jenneborg – Pott, e-mail 2003. Here I would suggest:



16... $\mathbb{Q}e8N$

Preventing the e4-e5 break.

16...b5 17.e5↑

17.a4 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d2$

18. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ keeps the kingside under control.

18... $\mathbb{R}b8$ 19.a5 b5 20.axb6 $\mathbb{R}xb6\rightleftharpoons$

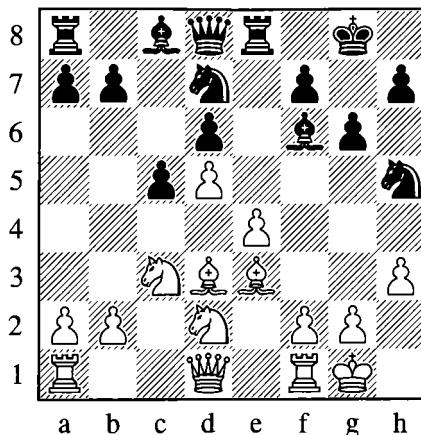
12... $\mathbb{R}e8$

12... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is possible, but it is always useful to activate the rook. After the text move I considered two main options for White: **B31) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$** and **B32) 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$** .

Once again Black does not have to be concerned about the advancing g-pawn: 13.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ (14.g5 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 15.bxc3 c4! gives Black interesting play on the light squares.) 14...a6 15.a4 Bern – Gallinnis, corr. 2002.

15...h5!N 16.g5 $\mathbb{Q}d4!\rightleftharpoons$

B31) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



13... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

Black is looking to play on the kingside dark squares.

14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?!$

A mistake, but it is worth highlighting the refutation.

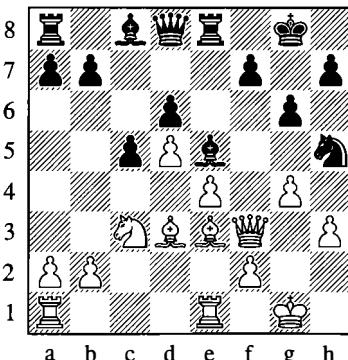
A better, if still harmless continuation is:

14. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$

Or 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe3N$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ with comfortable equality.

16. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17.g4?!

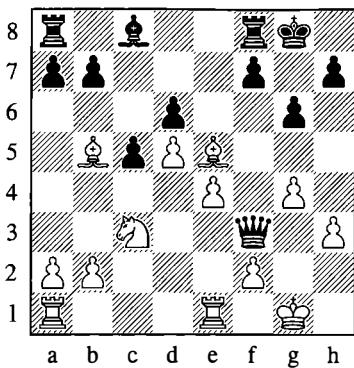
17. $\mathbb{Q}b5N$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$



17... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ g5 is also good for Black.

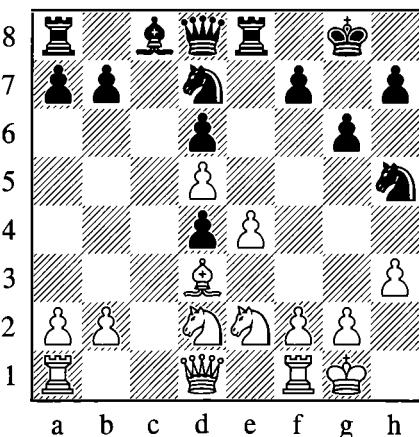
18... $\mathbb{E}f8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}f6\#$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$



21. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$

21... $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xe3$ 22. $fxe3$ $dxe5\#$
21... $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 22. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{W}xg4\#$ 23. $\mathbb{E}g3$ $\mathbb{W}h4+$
Fier – Brunello, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010.

14... $cxd4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



15... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

Improving over 15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ as had been played before.

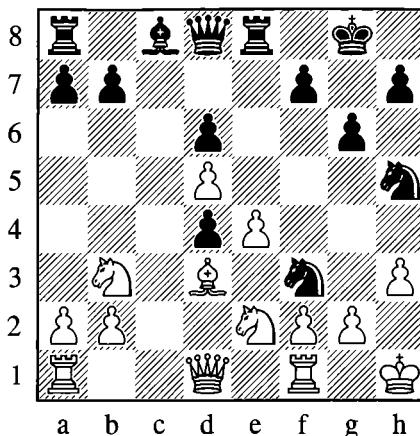
16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}f3\#!$

The key idea, which justifies Black's previous play.

17. $\mathbb{Q}h1?$

Taking the knight would have given better survival chances: 17. $gx f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ (17... $\mathbb{W}g5\#$

18. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}xf2\#$
21. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xf3\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ leads to a draw – Emms.) 18. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}bx d4$ $f5!$ Emms stops analysing here. Black's attack gives him the upper hand, but White had to try this and hope for the best.



17... $\mathbb{W}h4!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

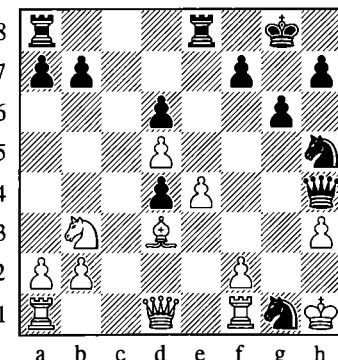
18. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3!$

Even stronger than 18... $\mathbb{Q}xg1$ as given by Emms.

19. $gxh3$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ wins.

19... $\mathbb{Q}xg1$



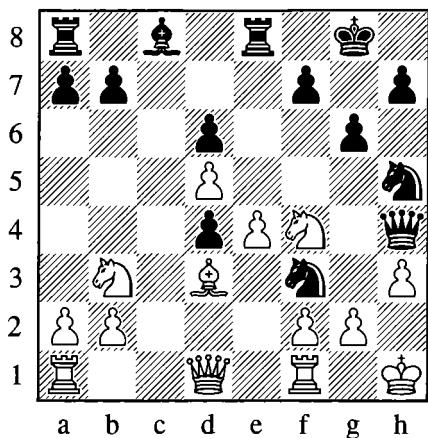
20. $\mathbb{W}g4$

20. $\mathbb{Q}xg1?$ $\mathbb{Q}f4$ is the end.

20... $\mathbb{W}xh3\#$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xh3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ –

With both material and position advantages, Black should win without much trouble.

The main move occurred in Biliskov – Zufic, Zadar 2008. Now Black's easiest route to victory is:



18...Qxf4N 19.Qxf3 Qxh3! 20.gxh3 Qxh3

Threatening a deadly discovered check.

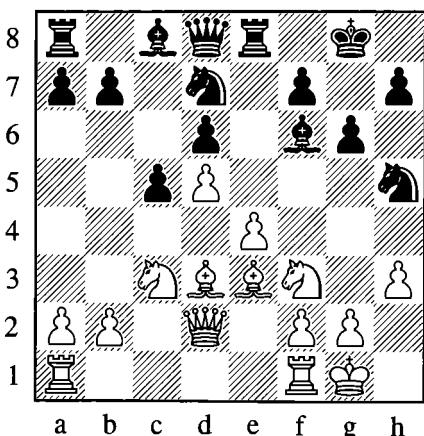
21.Qg3

21.Qg2 Qf4† 22.Qg1 Qe5 is crushing.

21...Qxf2†!–+

As pointed out by Emms.

B32) 13.Qd2



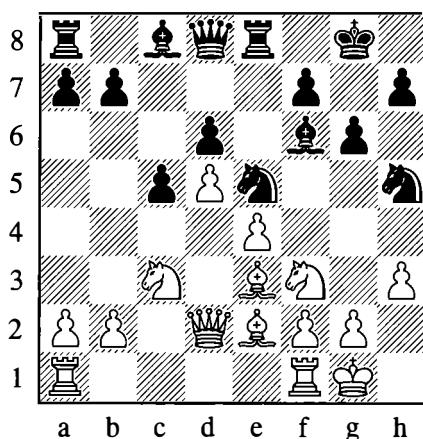
This is a better try for White; for one thing it does not allow the kind of dark-square attack that we saw in the previous line.

13...Qe5

Although Black is unlikely to win with a mating attack here, he keeps an active game and is not forced to return from the baseline, as they say in tennis.

14.Qe2

Exchanging on e5 is not dangerous: 14.Qxe5 Qxe5 15.Qe2 (15.f4?! Qxc3 16.Qxc3 Qg3 saw Black win material in Shulman – Langer, Las Vegas 2002.) 15...Qd7 16.Qfe1 Arreaga Orozco – Knebel, e-mail 2003. 16...b5N 17.f4 Qg7 Black has promising counterplay.



14...Qxf3† 15.Qxf3 Qg7

The knight is not as badly placed as it might appear, and may support the ...f5 break if it is needed.

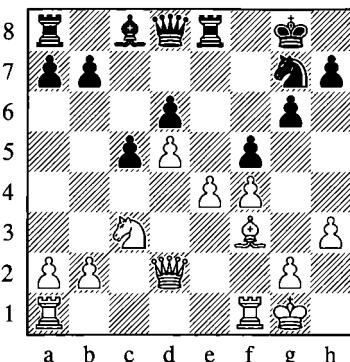
16.Qab1!?

Preparing b2-b4 is perhaps the most challenging plan for White. Here are a few other examples:

16.Qfe1 Qe5 17.Qf4 was played in Matthiesen – E. Pedersen, Denmark 2006, and now after 17...a6N 18.a4 b6 the black rook is ready to swing to the centre via a7.

16.Qf4 Qe5 17.Qxe5 Qxe5 18.Qe2 f5 19.f4 Qe8 20.Qf3 occurred in Cmilyte – Langer,

Gibraltar 2008. Here the logical continuation would have been:



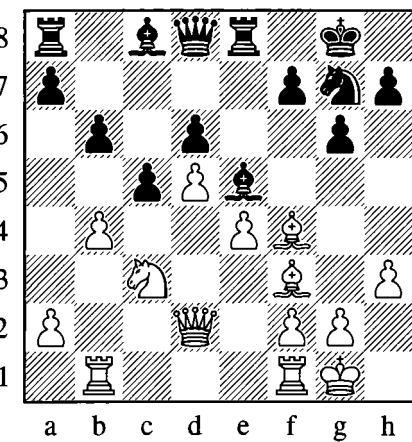
20...fxe4N 21.Qxe4 Qf5 22.Qg5 h6 23.Qe6
Wb6=

Conclusion

Against the 7.Qf3 move order 7...a6!? seems perfectly valid, although Black had better be prepared for the tricky 8.We2?! line as examined in line A2. If White wishes to play the Modern Main Line then the 7.Qd3 move order is the best way to do it, and after 7...Qg7 8.h3 0–0 9.Qf3 we reach the main tabiya for the system. According to my analysis neither 9...a6 nor 9...We8 10.0–0 c4 is particularly appealing for Black, so if the reader is looking for an alternative to the theory-laden 9...b5 variation of the previous chapter, 9...Qh5! looks like the best bet.

16...Qe5 17.b4 b6 18.Qf4

This position was reached in Schandorff – E. Pedersen, Denmark 2007. Since the queenside has now become a key battleground, I think Black should have taken the opportunity to take the enemy queen in the opposite direction:

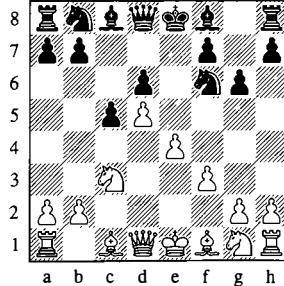


18...Qxf4!?!N 19.Wxf4 Qa6 20.Qf1 cxb4
21.Qxb4 Wc8?

Black has sufficient counterplay on the c-file.

Chapter 11

e4 Systems



Kapengut

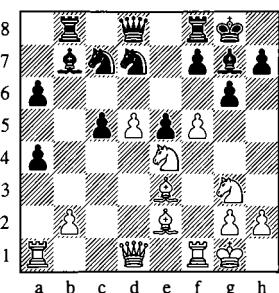
Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f3

7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

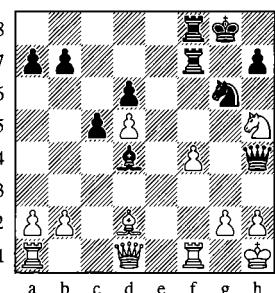
A) 8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0–0	9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$	145
A1) 9...a6		145
A2) 9...h5		146
A3) 9... $\mathbb{Q}h5!$?		148
B) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 0–0		149
B1) 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$		149
B2) 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$		150
C) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 0–0	9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$	152
C1) 9...a6		152
C2) 9...h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ h5 11. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$		155
C21) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$		156
C22) 11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$		157

A1) after 18.f6?



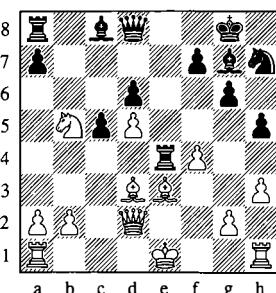
18... $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ N

A3) after 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



21... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ N

C22) after 20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



20... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ N

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f3

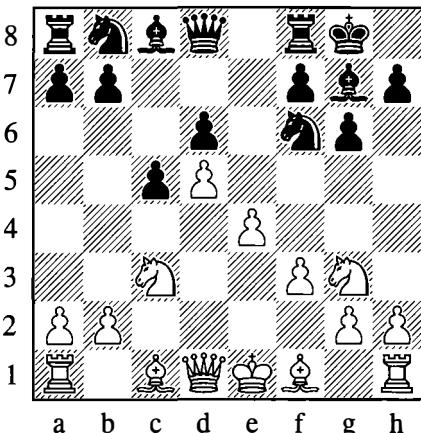
This set-up is named after the Belarusian master Albert Kapengut, although the main lines of the present chapter arise more frequently via the Sämisch Variation of the King's Indian Defence.

White's last move prepares to develop the bishop on e3 without fearing harassment from a knight on g4. On the negative side, White not only spends a tempo on a pawn move, but will often spend considerable time on manoeuvres such as $\mathbb{Q}g1-e2-g3$ followed by $\mathbb{Q}h1-f2$ or $\mathbb{Q}f1-d2$. But as we say in my country: for every train there are passengers!

7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

From here White usually proceeds with one of the following developing moves: A) **8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$, B) **8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ or C) **8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$.** Obviously transpositions are possible, but each move can give rise to independent possibilities as well.****

A) 8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ 0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$



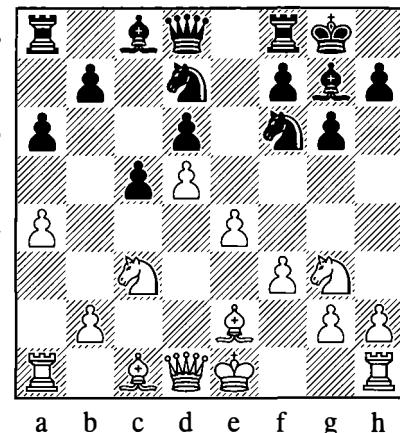
9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ leads straight to line B1 on page 149. After the text move it is worth considering three main options for Black: A1) 9...a6, A2) 9...h5 and the remarkable A3) 9... $\mathbb{Q}h5$!..

A1) 9...a6 10.a4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

This is the most natural scheme of development for Black.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Once again 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ will lead to variation B1.



11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$!

I like this move a lot. Instead of chasing the knight away from g3, where it is not brilliantly placed anyhow, Black manoeuvres his knight to support the ...b5 plan.

11...h5

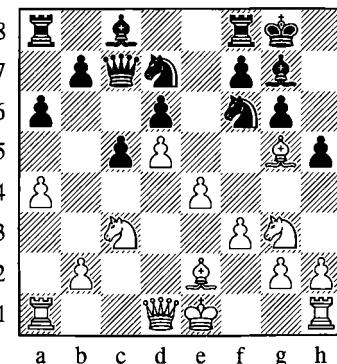
This is the main line. It seems okay too, even if it is not my favourite plan in the position.

12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

The black queen has a couple of options.

12... $\mathbb{W}c7$

12... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$?! (14.a5 is better) 14... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 15.0–0 c4† 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17. $\mathbb{E}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{W}e3\bar{f}$ Dambacher – Bojkov, Belgium 2011.



13.♗d2 ♘b8 14.0–0 c4 15.♕e3 h4 16.♗h1 h3
16...♘c5 is also decent.

17.♗f2 hxg2 18.♗xg2

The position was roughly balanced in Anand – Nakamura, Moscow 2011.

12.0–0 ♘b8 13.♕e3 ♘c7

Black is ready to commence his counterplay, and White must decide what to do about it.

14.f4

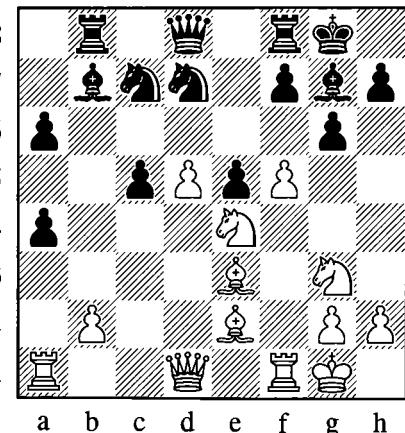
White goes for swift action in the centre. 14.a5 is nothing special: 14...b5 15.axb6 ♘xb6 (15...♘b5!?N=) 16.♗d2 ♘b4= Gupta – Vishnu, Chalkis 2010.

14...b5 15.e5

Definitely the most ambitious move. Instead 15.axb5 ♘xb5 16.♗xb5 axb5 17.♗d2 ♘e8 was comfortable for Black in Antonsen – Mortensen, Farum 1993.

15...bxa4 16.♘ce4 dxe5 17.f5 ♘b7

17...♗xb2!N looks like an improvement, as 18.d6 ♘b5 favours Black. Still, it is worth mentioning a tactical point that occurred in the game after the text move.



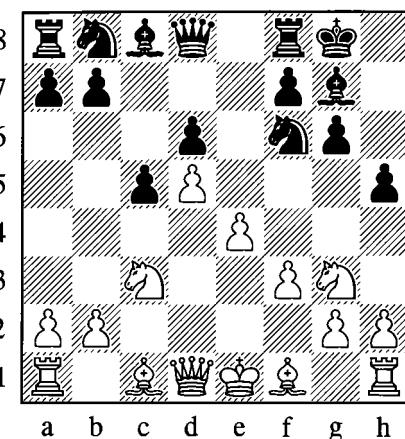
18.f6?

This occurred in Bargan – Dochev, Paracin 2010, and here Black could have obtained a big advantage as follows:

18...♗xf6!N 19.♗g5 ♘ce8 20.♗xf6+ ♘xf6
21.♗xf6 ♘xf6 22.♘e4 ♘xe4 23.♗xd8
♗fxd8#

Black has a rook, knight and several pawns for the queen.

A2) 9...h5

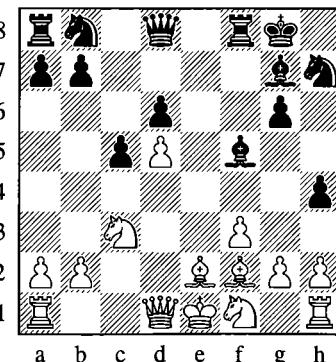


Since the knight has come to g3 so early, it is tempting to accelerate Black's kingside play.

10.♗g5

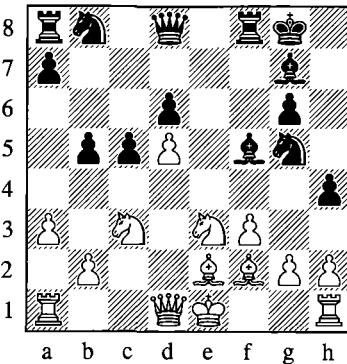
It seems logical to hold up the h-pawn.

Ignoring it allows Black to develop rapid counterplay: 10.♗e2 h4 11.♗f1 ♘h7 12.♗e3 f5 13.exf5 ♘xf5 14.♗f2



14...b5! 15.a3 ♘g5! (After the slower 15...a6 16.♘e3 White's position was starting to make

more sense in Dreev – Tkachiev, Shanghai 2001.) 16.♕e3 Now in Kopasov – Oortwijn, Internet 2003, I think Black should have played:

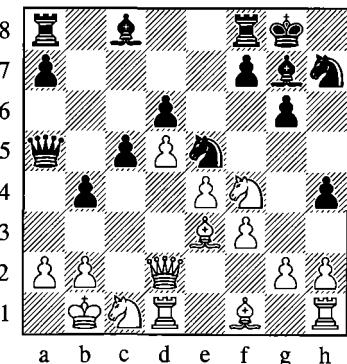


16...h3!N 17.g3 ♕e7 18.0–0 a6⇒ with a double-edged game.

10...♗b6 11.♗d2 ♔h7 12.♔h4

It seems a bit odd to combine a knight on g3 with a bishop on h4, but several strong players have followed this path.

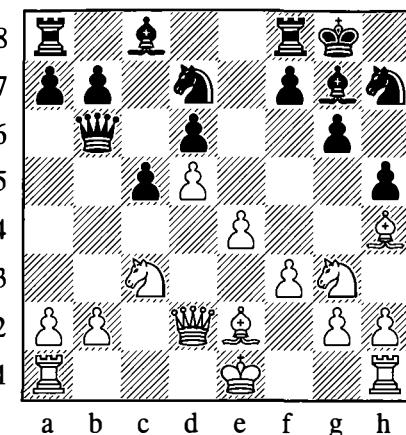
12.♗e3 ♔d7 13.0–0–0?! is hardly an improvement: 13...h4 14.♗ge2 ♕a5 15.♗b1 b5 16.♗c1 b4 17.♗3e2 ♔e5 18.♗f4



Now in Braun – Gallagher, Olbia 2008, the logical 18...c4!N would have given Black excellent attacking chances.

12...♗d7 13.♗e2

Now Black has a couple of contrasting options.



13...a6

13...g5!?

After this sharp move both kings could become unsettled.

14.♗xg5 ♔xg5 15.♗xh5!?

An interesting long-term piece sacrifice.

Another game continued: 15.♗xb2 16.♗c1 ♔f6 17.♗d1 ♕b4† 18.♗f2 h4⇒ 19.♗c4?? hxg3† 20.hxg3 ♕b1+ Dubessay – Martinovic, Sibenik 2012.

15...♗h7 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.g4=

White had reasonable compensation in Sandipan – Caspi, Zürich 2009.

14.0–0 c4† 15.♗h1

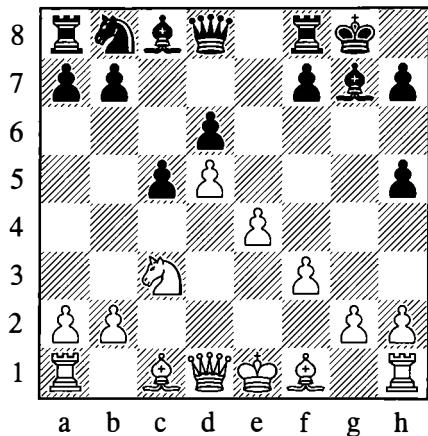
This position was reached in Svetushkin – Denny, Turin (ol) 2006, and here Black should have gone forwards!

15...♗d4!N 16.♗xd4 ♔xd4 17.♗e7!?

An interesting solution, which looks preferable to 17.♗xc4 ♔b6 18.♗b3 g5†.

17...♗e8 18.♗xd6 h4 19.♗xc4 hxg3 20.♗xg3

White's three pawns should give him enough for the piece, but no advantage in my view.

A3) 9...Qh5!! 10.Qxh5 gxh5


This looks like an even more extreme version of the famous ...Qh5 idea as used by Fischer against Spassky. Here Black incurs a similar shattering of his kingside pawns, without gaining the advantage of the bishop pair as a consolation. Fortunately the news is not all bad; the ...f5 break will come quickly and the f2-f3 move has weakened White's dark squares, in addition to shielding the h5-pawn from attack.

11.Qd3 f5 12.0-0 Qd7

If the knight has the chance to settle on the splendid e5-square, all other options should be skipped. For instance: 12...Qa6 13.a3 Qd7 14.Wc2 Wf6 15.Wh1 Wac8 16.We2 Qc7 17.Wf4 Wce8 18.Wd2± Taborov – Pavlov, Kiev 2003.

13.Qc2

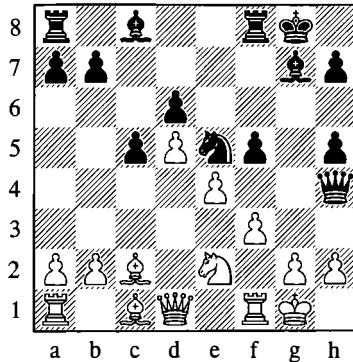
13.exf5 Qe5 14.f6 Wxf6 15.Qe4 Wg6 16.Qc2 Qf5 17.Qh1 b5 gave Black fully satisfactory play in Novikov – Langer, Lindsborg 2002.

13...Qe5

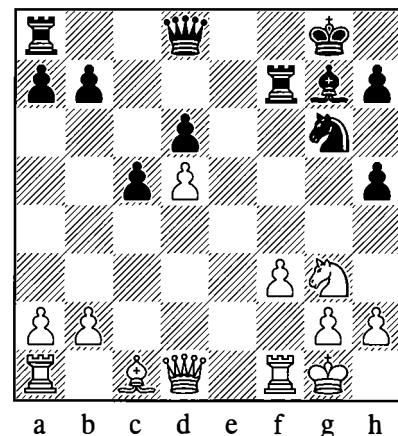
Black can also establish a dark-squared blockade with: 13...f4!N 14.Qe2 Qe5 15.Qh1 h4=

14.Qe2 Qg6

It is worth pointing out the erroneous 14...Wh4? as played in Dreev – Peng Xiaomin, Beijing 2000. Here White could have obtained a pleasant advantage by simple means:



15.exf5 Nxf5 16.Qxf5 Wxf5 17.Qg3 Wff8
18.Qe4 We7 19.Qg5±

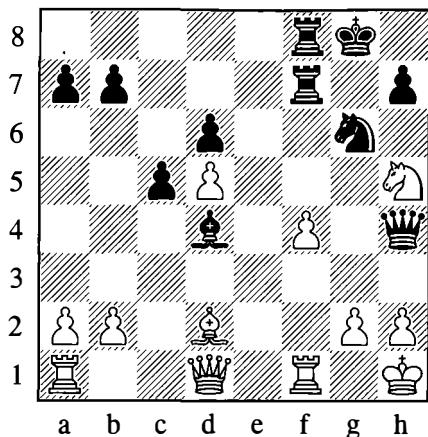
15.exf5 Qxf5 16.Qxf5 Wxf5 17.Qg3 Wf7

18.Qxh5

Taking the pawn must be critical. 18.Qe4 was played in Kraft – Kuhn, e-mail 2008, and here I suggest 18...Wd7N 19.Qg5 Qd4† 20.Qh1 Wf5 21.Wb3 Wc8 when Black has sufficient counterplay.

18...Qd4† 19.Qh1 Wh4 20.f4 Waf8 21.Qd2

We have been following the game Iljin – Sjugirov, St Petersburg 2005. So far Black's

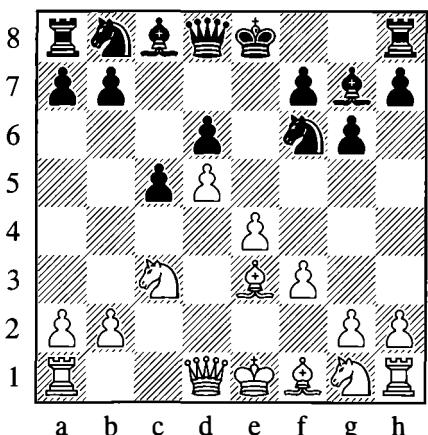
play has been excellent, and here he could have obtained the upper hand with:



21... $\mathbb{Q}e5!N$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}el$ $\mathbb{W}g4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xg4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4\#$

Black is temporarily a pawn down, but his pieces are much more active and several of White's pawns are weak.

B) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



8...0–0

Now it is worth checking both **B1) 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$** and **B2) 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$** .

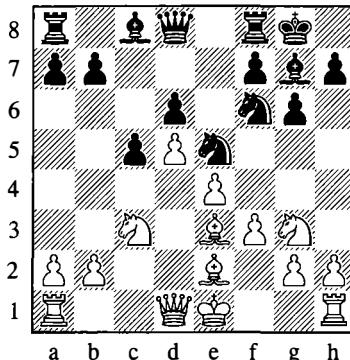
B1) 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

Deciding the knight's position so early gives Black an attractive option.

10...h5!

This is an easy and straightforward route to a good game.

It is worth comparing the alternative: 10... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



This position is more commonly reached via the King's Indian move order: 1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 $g6$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 4.e4 $d6$ 5.f3 0–0 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ c5 7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 8.d5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ e6 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ exd5 11.cxd5.

Notice that in the above move order Black is forced to put his knight on e5 before playing ...e6. In our Benoni move order this is not the case, and we can obtain a good game by leaving the knight back on d7 for a few more moves. So although transposing to the King's Indian is a valid option which leads to interesting play, I see little point in doing so when an easier and less theoretically dense alternative exists.

11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ h4 12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

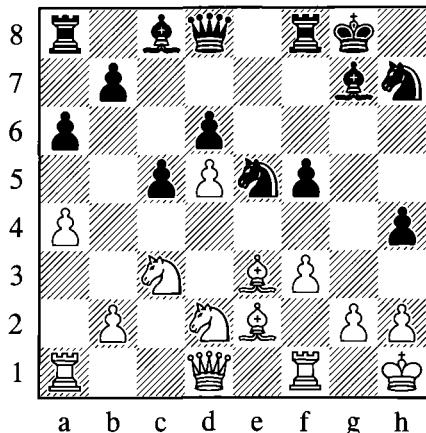
The knight must be feeling tired already.

13...a6

Black can also do without this move, for instance: 13...f5 14.0–0 (14.exf5 gxf5 15.0–0 f4 16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ h3 \rightarrow) 14...f4 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16.a4= Lapicciarella – Chatalbashev, Bratto 2010.

14.a4 f5 15.exf5 gxf5 16.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

Korchnoi – Saric, Porto Carras 2011.



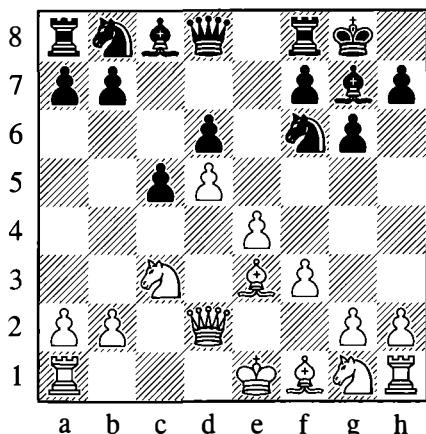
17...f4N

Cementing the knight's position in the centre.

18.♕f2 h3?

Black has a full share of the chances.

B2) 9.♗d2



Although White's set-up resembles the Yugoslav Attack against the Sicilian Dragon, don't expect any craziness involving long castling and marching the h-pawn.

9...♝e8

It is worth pointing out that 9...♝bd7 is inaccurate due to 10.♞h3! when the knight finds an ideal home on f2.

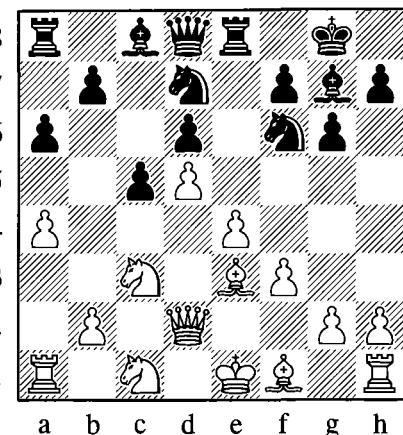
On the other hand 9...h5 is perfectly playable and immediately transposes to line C2 on page 156.

10.♛ge2 ♜bd7 11.♝c1

11.♝g3 h5 is hardly an improvement for White over the previous variation, as the white queen is blocking the knight's route via f1-d2.

11...a6 12.a4

After some standard opening moves it is time for Black to decide on a plan.



12...♞h5??

With the simple idea of preparing ...f5.

I also like the following option:

12...h5

Even without a knight on g3 this move makes some sense. The knight can drop back to h7 to make way for ...f5, while in some positions the further advance of the h-pawn could be considered.

13.♕e2 ♜h7 14.0-0 ♜e5 15.♝1a2

15.♝b1 f5 16.b4 c4= 17.f4?! Hobaica – Barbosa, Brasilia 2010. 17...♝g4N 18.♕xg4 hxg4?

15...♝d7 16.♝ab1 f5 17.b4 c4= 18.f4?!

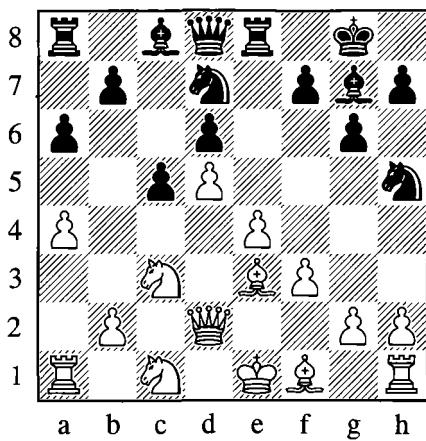
Once again this aggressive move does more harm than good to White.

18...♝d3

18...♝g4?

19.♕xd3 cxd3 20.♗xd3 ♜f6=

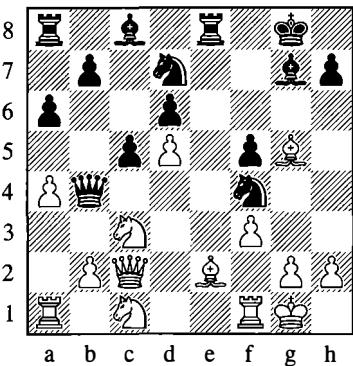
Moutousis – Kotronias, Aghia Pelagia 2004.



13.g4?

A clear mistake, but it is worth seeing the refutation.

White should prefer 13.♕e2 although here too Black is in good shape: 13...f5 14.exf5 gxf5 15.♕g5 ♜a5 16.0–0 ♜b4 17.♗c2 ♜f4 The imaginative plan of utilizing the queen to support a kingside outpost along the fourth rank makes a nice impression.

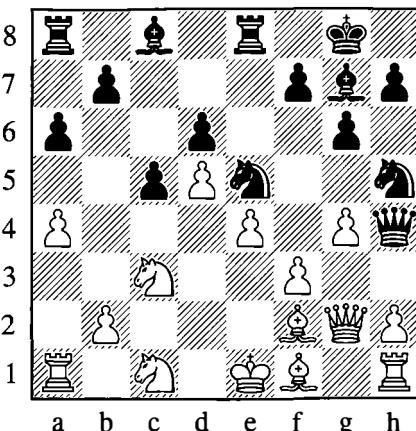


18.♗xf5?! (18.♔h1N h6 19.♕xf4 ♜xf4=)

18...♜xb2 19.♔a2 ♜xc3 20.♗xf4 ♜e5 (20...♜e5!N 21.♗h4 ♜d4†+) 21.♗d2? (21.♗e4†) 21...♜f7† Shumilina – Loeffler, Vienna 2009.

13...♜e5! 14.♗g2 ♜h4† 15.♔f2

It is possible that White calculated this far but missed the crushing follow-up.

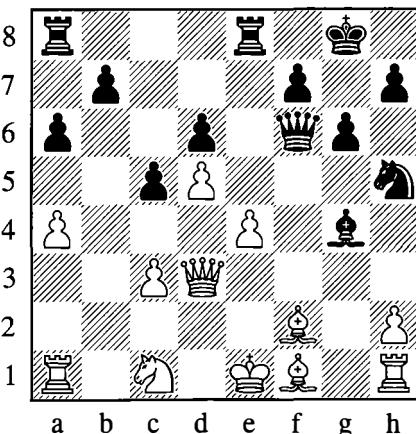


15...♜xf3†! 16.♗xf3 ♜xg4 17.♗d3?

The only chance was: 17.♗xf7† ♜xf7 18.♖xh4 ♜xc3† 19.bxc3 ♜xe4† 20.♔f2 ♜f8 21.♗g2 ♜g7† 22.♔g1 ♜e3†

17...♜xc3† 18.bxc3 ♜f6

White can do nothing to prevent a decisive breakthrough along the e-file.

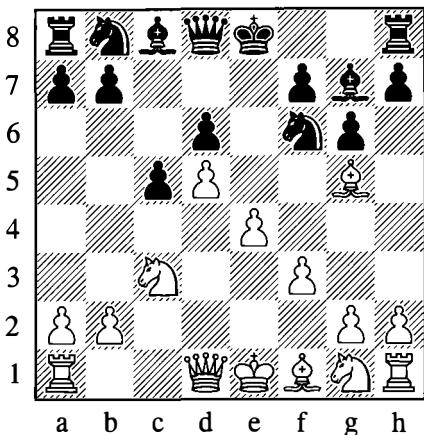


19.♔e2 ♜f3 20.♗g1 ♜xe4 21.♔d2 ♜ae8

22.♗g3 ♜xg3 23.♗xg3 c4

0–1

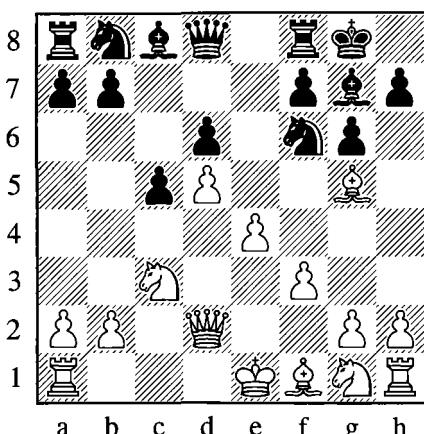
Enchev – Berbatov, Bankia 2011. A perfect demonstration of Black's chances!

C) 8.♗g5

White wants to provoke ...h6, but Black can do without that move. At the same time we have already seen that Black often plays ...h5 regardless, so it's not such a special achievement for White either way.

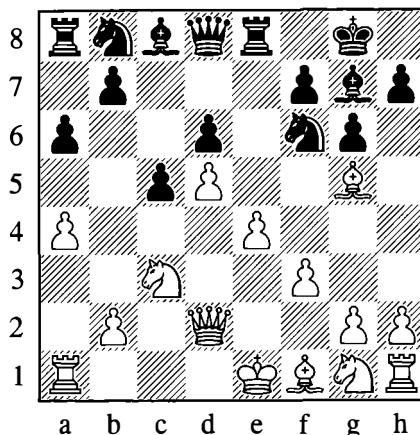
8...0–0

If Black wishes to nudge the bishop then he should consider 8...h6!? immediately, as this takes away the option given in the note to White's 10th move in line C2 – see page 155.

9.♘d2

Now there are two main directions. Black can ignore the bishop and focus his attention

on the queenside with C1) 9...a6, or he can attack it with C2) 9...h6 followed by his thematic kingside play, along the lines that we have already seen.

C1) 9...a6 10.a4 ♜e8**11.♗ge2 ♜bd7 12.♗g3 ♜a5**

Black breaks the pin and establishes a pin of his own along the a-file.

13.♖a3

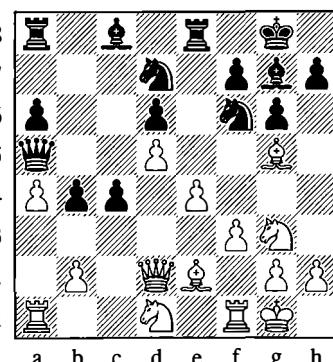
White takes steps against ...b5. He has also ignored it in several games:

13.♗e2 b5

13...h5 has been played but it seems inconsistent.

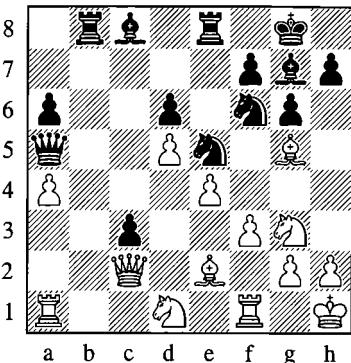
14.0–0 b4 15.♗d1 c4

Black's counterplay is well underway, while White is a long way from achieving anything on the kingside.



16.♕h1

16.♗xc4 ♕c5† 17.♕e3 h6 18.♗xf6 ♗xf6
 19.♗fe1 ♘b8 20.♗ab1 b3 21.♗gf1 ♘b4∞
 White remained a pawn up but paid a substantial price in the shape of his dark-squared bishop in Stoltz – Boos, e-mail 2006.
 16...♗e5 17.♗e3 c3 18.bxc3 bxc3 19.♗c2
 ♘b8 20.♗d1



20...h6!

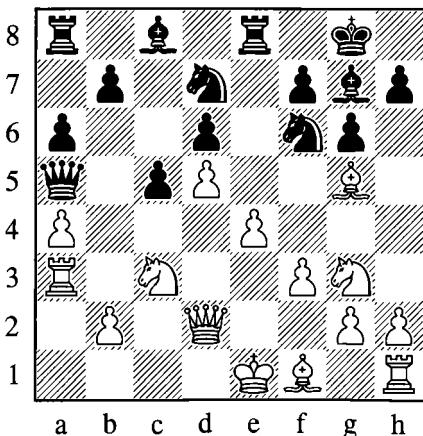
Black's little 'Hobbit' starts its journey!

21.♗e3 h5! 22.♗e1 h4 23.♗f1 h3!

The humble pawn has single-handedly pushed back White's pieces and facilitated the destruction of his entire position, as demonstrated by the game continuation:

24.g3? ♗xd5! 25.exd5 ♘f5 26.♗xc3 ♘xd5
 27.♗d2 ♘a8–+

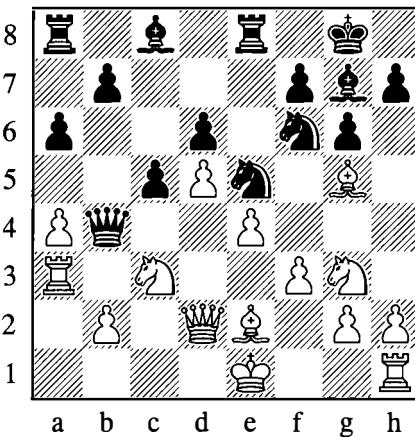
Gross – Kende, Budapest 1998. White faces imminent disaster on the f3-square.



13...♘b4

Another game continued 13...h5 14.♗e2 ♘h7 15.♗f4 ♘e5 16.0–0 ♘d7 17.♗h6 h4 18.♗xg7 with equality, Martin – Arakhamia-Grant, Sunningdale 2007.

14.♗e2 ♘e5



15.0–0 ♘fd7!

A queen exchange only helps White: 15...♘d4†?! 16.♗h1 ♘xd2 17.♗xd2 c4 18.a5 ♘d7 19.♗a4 ♘xa4 20.♗ac8± Mortensen – Hoi, Ringsted 1995.

A somewhat better alternative is 15...♗c4 16.♗xc4 ♘xc4 17.♗f4 ♘f8 18.♗h6 ♘e7 (18...♗xh6 19.♗xh6 ♘d7=) 19.♗a2 a5 20.♗cl ♘a6 21.♗e3 ♘d7 with a reasonable position for Black in Papaioannou – Gagunashvili, Budva 2009.

Nevertheless I find the text move the most logical. The knight is going to support Black's queenside play, while all the white pieces seem to be sitting on strange places.

16.♗h1 c4!?

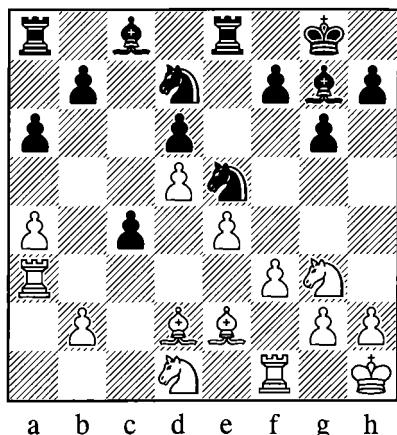
I find this move the most interesting, although 16...♗b6 gave Black an acceptable position in Puschendorf – Heyn, e-mail 2000. The main move is technically a novelty, although it immediately transposes to another game which we will follow for a few moves.

17.♕d1!?

After the superior 17.a5N b5 18.axb6 ♔xb6 the position is roughly equal.

17...♛xd2 18.♔xd2

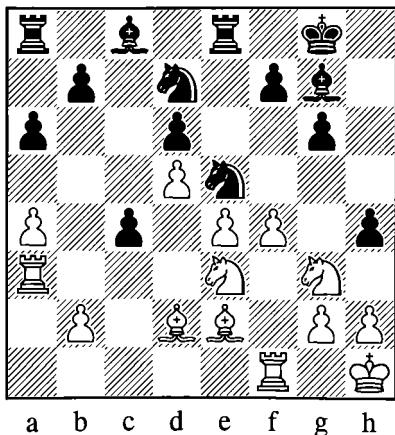
Peralta – Ferreira, Asuncion 1999. Here I found a nice idea for Black:

**18...h5!N**

Black must disrupt his opponent's position before ♔e3 puts him in defensive mode.

19.♔e3!?

Attempting to provoke a conflict. 19.♗e1 ♔c5 20.♔e3 ♔d7 21.♔xc4 ♔xa4 favours Black slightly.

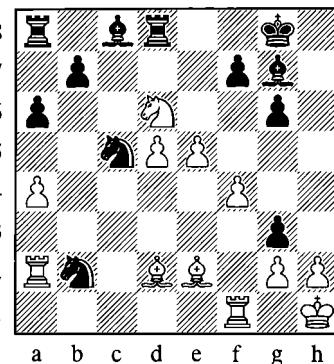
19...h4 20.f4**20...hxg3!**

Black must avoid the seemingly tempting alternative:

20...♔d3?

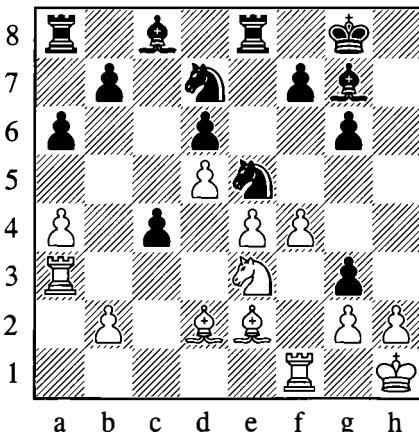
The complications are not in our favour.

21.♔xc4 ♔xb2 22.♔xd6 ♕d8 23.e5 hxg3
24.♕a2 ♔c5
24...♔xe5 25.fxe5 ♕xe5 26.♔xf7 ♕xd5
27.♔c1 ♕g7 28.♔xb2 ♕xb2 29.♔xb2 ♕e6
30.♔c4±

**25.♔xc8**

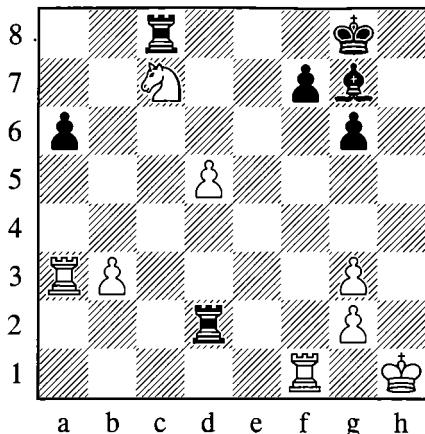
25.♕xb2? ♕xd6!±

25...♕axc8 26.♕xb2 ♔xa4 27.♕a2 ♔c3
28.♕xc3 ♕xc3 29.♔f3 f6±

**21.fxe5 ♕xe5 22.hxg3**

White is poised to win a pawn, but Black's active pieces and dynamic energy will prove far more significant:

22... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ b5! 24.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$
 25. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 26.b3 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$
 28. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$

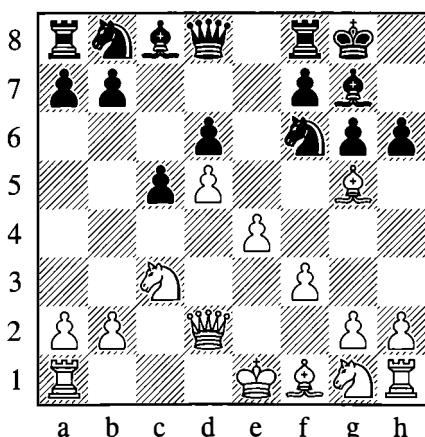


White is in trouble. Note the following attractive point:

29. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

With the terrible threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ and mate.

C2) 9...h6



10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

White can also consider taking the pawn:

10. $\mathbb{Q}xh6?$

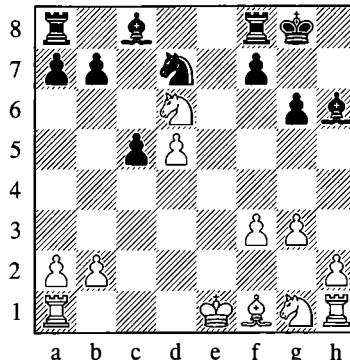
This is a valid option, albeit not an especially promising one.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

This thematic mini-combination should be familiar to Benoni and King's Indian players alike.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}h4\#$ 12.g3 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xh6$
 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

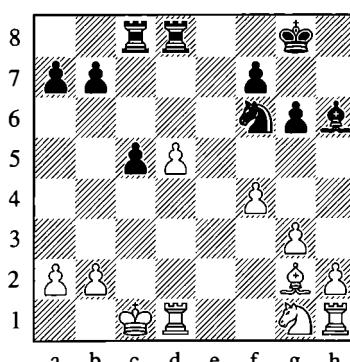
Black has sufficient compensation, but it will be hard to play for a win.



15.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

15... $\mathbb{Q}b6$? is slightly inaccurate: 16.0–0–0
 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}axc8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ f5 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$
 Radusinovic – Zakic, Belgrade 2010.

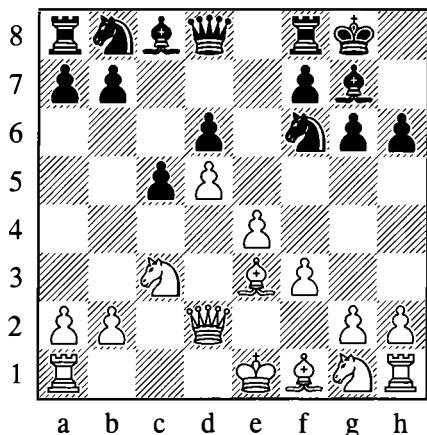
16.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}axc8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g2$
 18.d6 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 19.d7 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}el$ $\mathbb{Q}cxd7=$
 Vidarte Morales – Minguez Rodriguez, Barcelona 2011.



18... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$
 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$
 25.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xd5=$

Piket – Van Wely, Amsterdam 1996.

Let me repeat a point that was made earlier on page 152. If you intend to chase the bishop with ...h6, I would suggest doing it on move 8 in order to avoid giving White the option of playing the above line. 10.Qxh6 may not be theoretically dangerous for Black, but why allow it at all when we don't have to?



10...h5

If Black wants to put his rook on e8 (as in variation C21 below) there is nothing to stop him from doing so immediately. However, the ...h5 move will normally be played at some point so I will assume Black plays it now before discussing the options for his other pieces.

By the way, it is worth mentioning that 10...Qbd7 needlessly gives White the useful option of 11.Qh3! when he has good chances for an advantage.

Here is one interesting example where Black managed to do without the ...h5 move:

10...Rxe8 11.a4

11.Qge2 h5 reaches line C21 below.

11...a6

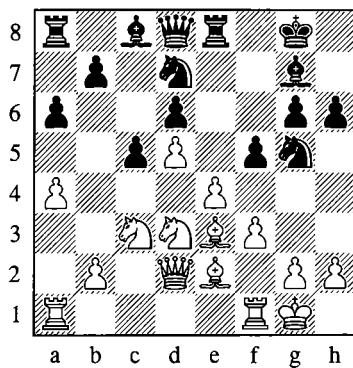
11...Qbd7 12.Qh3! is worth mentioning again.

12.Qge2 Qbd7 13.Qc1 Qh7?!

An interesting way of utilizing the ...h6 move. Black prepares not only to play ...f5, but also to station his knight on g5.

14.Qe2 f5 15.0-0 Qg5 16.Qd3

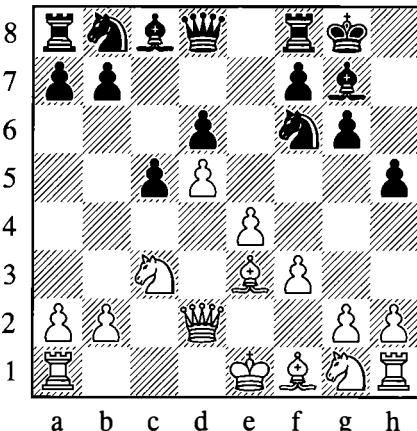
This position was reached in Sasikiran – Radjabov, Kallithea 2008, and here Radjabov points out two ways to improve on his play:



16...fxe4N

16...Qxc3?!N 17.bxc3 fxe4∞ is also interesting.

17.Qxe4 Qf6⇒ 18.Qxg5?! Qxd5±



11.Qge2

Now it is worth discussing both **C21** 11...Rxe8 and **C22** 11...Qbd7 with the idea of rushing the knight to e5 and leaving the rook on f8.

C21) 11...Rxe8 12.Qc1

White could hardly deploy the knight on g3, for obvious reasons. Therefore it must go

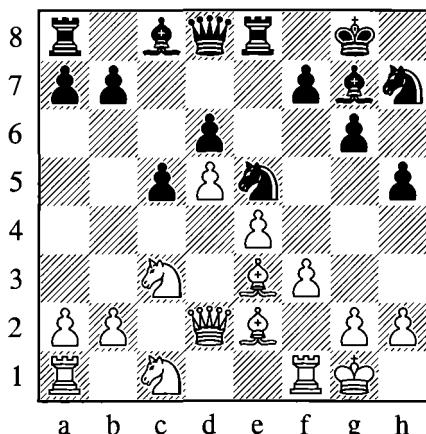
to c1 and later perhaps d3 or even b3. This strangeness is all due to the earlier f2-f3 move.

12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Meanwhile the black knight takes up its typical post in the centre.

14.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}h7$

Preparing to launch the f-pawn.



15. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

It is also quite possible to exchange the bishops: 15... $\mathbb{Q}xh6!?$ N 16. $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$

16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

16.a4 a6 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}1a2$ f5 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ fxe4 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 22.fxe4 was agreed drawn in Illescas Cordoba – Marin, Barcelona 2000, and indeed after 22... $\mathbb{W}c7$ Black is certainly not worse.

16...a6 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ b5?

The position was double-edged but roughly equal in De Sa – Noronha, e-mail 2005.

C22) 11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

This time Black postpones putting the rook on e8, reasoning that it might prove just as effective on f8 where it supports a future ...f5.

The potential danger of rushing with the knight to e5 is that White may try to arrange f3-f4, so it is important to be familiar with the various tactical resources needed to justify Black's last move.

13.h3

Preparing f3-f4 is the critical test.

The alternative is:

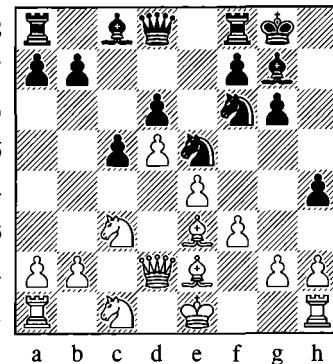
13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

And here I have a suggestion for you.

13...h4!?

With the simple idea of ...h3, so that after White responds with g2-g3, a subsequent f3-f4 will be met by ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ when the knight's future is secure.

I will just briefly mention that the most common move has been 13... $\mathbb{Q}h7$ intending ...f5.



14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

14.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ could be annoying for White.

14.0–0 allows Black to carry out his plan: 14...h3 15.g3 a6 16.a4 $\mathbb{Q}d7=$ Black no longer has any reason to fear f3-f4.

14...h3 15.gxh3!?

15.g3 falls in with Black's plan, so the text move is critical.

15...a6!?

15... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ is also playable, and may lead to approximate equality after the following line: 16.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 17.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ 18.exf6 $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

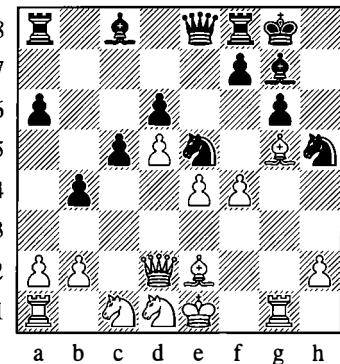
19.♕xf6 ♕xf6 20.♗d3 ♕h4† 21.♗f2 ♕g2
 (21...f5? 22.0–0–0 ♕xf2 23.♕xh1 f4 24.♕f1
 ♕xh2 25.e5±) 22.♗d3 ♕xh2 23.0–0–0 ♖f3
 24.♗e1 ♕g7=

The text move could lead to some wild complications. The following line is nowhere near forced, but it illustrates some important tactical resources while also providing considerable entertainment.

16.h4!?

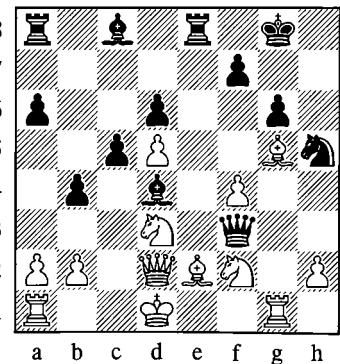
16.a4 gives Black a choice between 16...♕xh3 by analogy with the note to the previous move, and 16...♔a5 renewing the possibility of ...b5.

16...b5 17.h5 b4 18.♗d1 ♔e8 19.♕g1
 19.hxg6?? ♗xf3†! 20.♕xf3 ♗xe4 21.gxf7†
 ♕xf7 22.♗e2 ♗xf3+
 19...♗xh5 20.f4



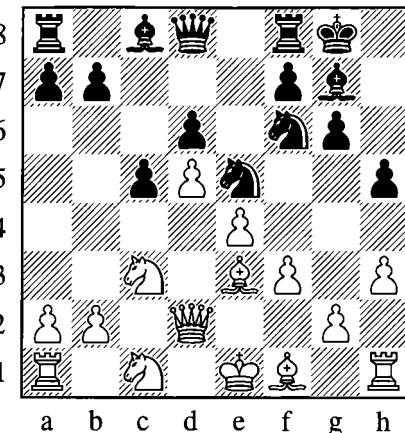
20...♗c4!! 21.♗xc4 ♕xe4† 22.♗e2
 22.♗e2 ♕d4 23.♗f1 ♕g4 24.♗xg4 ♕xc4=

22...♗e8 23.♗f2 ♕f3 24.♗cd3 ♖d4 25.♗d1



25...♗xe2! 26.♗xe2 ♕xd5†

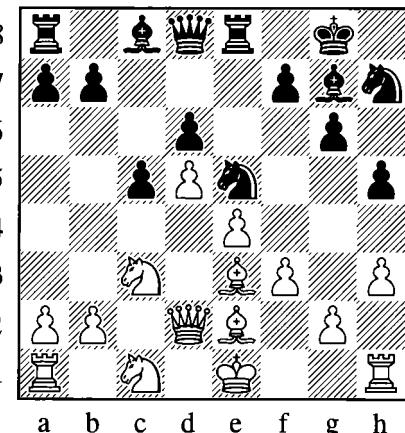
Black is a rook for two pawns down, but his pieces dominate the board and the white king faces a turbulent future.



13...♗e8 14.♗e2

14.f4? is premature due to 14...♗ed7 15.♗d3 b5†.

14...♗h7



15.f4?

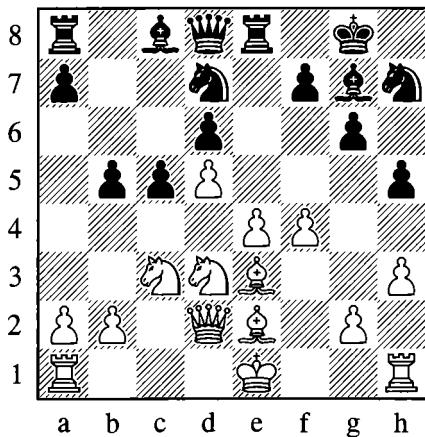
This tempting move only leads to trouble for White. Correct is: 15.0–0–0 f5 16.♗b3 fxe4 17.♗xe4 Shishkin – Ionescu, Bucharest 2004, and now 17...♗f6N would have kept the position roughly equal.

15...♝d7 16.♝d3

Now Black has more than one way to exploit the vulnerability of White's centre.

16...b5

16...♝xc3?!N Yes, I know it's difficult to exchange this bishop for a knight, but here it is okay! 17.bxc3 ♜xe4 (17...♞hf6 18.♝f2 ♜xe4 19.♝xe4 ♜xe4 20.0–0 ♜b6+) 18.0–0 ♜b6+



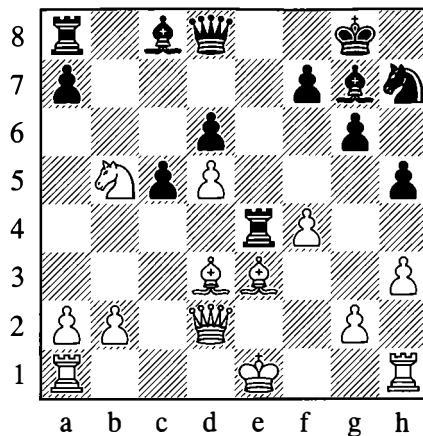
17.♝xb5?!

This does not help. The sacrifice 17.e5?! dx5 18.f5 looks like White's best chance to complicate the game, although Black is still better.

17...♝df6 18.♝f2 ♜xe4 19.♝xe4 ♜xe4

20.♝d3

Now in Nikolov–Chatalbashev, Blagoevgrad 2010, Black's strongest continuation would have been:



20...♜b4!N

In the game Black quickly got a winning position with 20...♛h4† 21.♚f1 ♜b4 22.♝b1? ♜a6–+, but White could have offered more resistance with 22.♝xd6N ♜xb2 23.♛e1.

21.♝c3 ♜ab8 22.b3 ♛e7 23.♝f2

23.♝c1 ♜xf4 wins a pawn while preventing castling.

23...♝xc3! 24.♛xc3 ♜f6

Followed by ...♝xd5 with both a material and positional advantage.

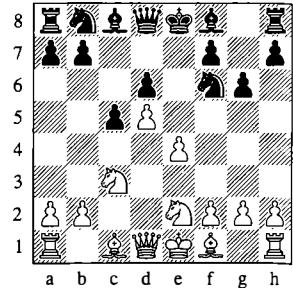
Conclusion

We covered three main move orders for White, none of them especially dangerous but all with their own nuances. The early 8.♝ge2-g3 plan gives Black several decent plans, with 9...♞h5?! being the boldest of all. 8.♛e3 and 8.♛g5 lead to similar types of positions and can sometimes transpose if Black plays ...h6 and later ...h5. Both moves allow Black to choose between a few different set-ups, all of which give him reasonable play as far as I can see.

Chapter 12

e4 Systems

7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$



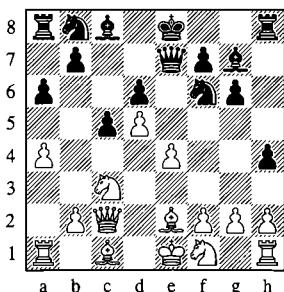
Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

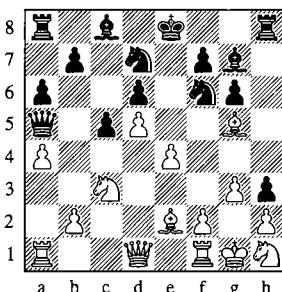
- | | |
|------------|-----|
| A) 8...h5 | 161 |
| B) 8...a6 | 162 |
| C) 8...0-0 | 163 |

A) after 12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$



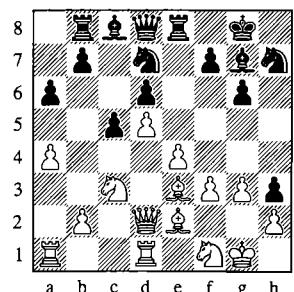
12...h3?N

B) after 14.g3



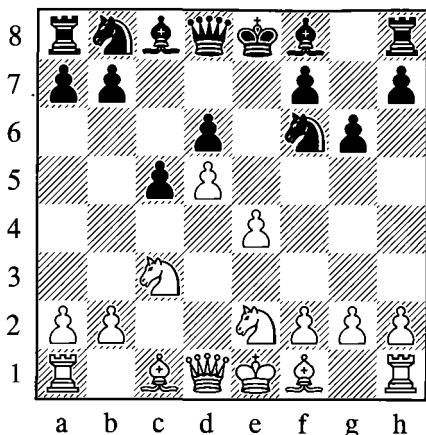
14...c4!N

C) note to 16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$



18... $\mathbb{Q}e5!N$

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5
6.e4 g6 7.♘ge2



This rare but quite sophisticated system was recommended by Lars Schandorff in his recent book covering the Indian Defences from White's side.

The idea is to put the knight on g3 and develop in a similar manner as in the previous chapter, but without spending time on f2-f3 until there is a good reason for it. So in a nutshell, White is aiming for an improved version of the Kapengut System.

7...♗g7 8.♘g3

From this position I will cover two interesting plans in A) 8...h5 and B) 8...a6, both of which involve delaying castling, followed by the main line of C) 8...0-0.

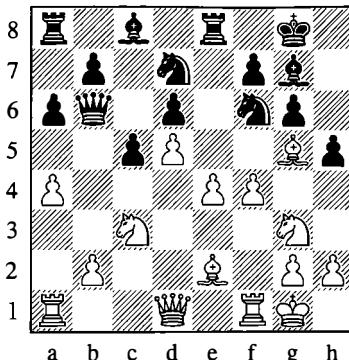
A) 8...h5

Certainly the most direct challenge to the knight sortie.

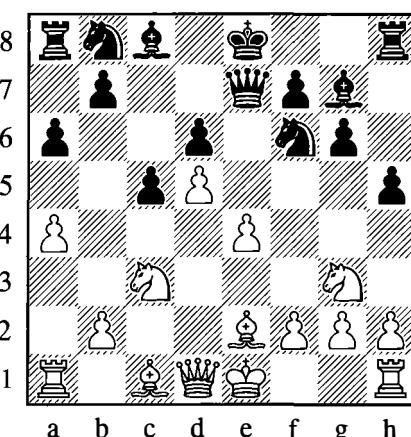
9.♗e2 a6 10.a4 ♛e7?

Persisting with the plan of early disruption.

The following game led to a complicated struggle: 10...0-0 11.♗g5 ♘bd7 12.0-0 ♜e8 13.f4? ♛b6



14.e5! dx5 15.f5 A typical pawn sacrifice.
15...♛xb2 16.fxg6 fxg6 17.♖c1 ♛b4 18.♖c2 e4 19.♔h1 ♔h8 20.d6 This was Shishkin – Leon Hoyos, Navamoral de la Mata 2010, and now 20...♛d4N 21.♖cd1 ♛e5 would have left the position highly unclear.



11.♖c2

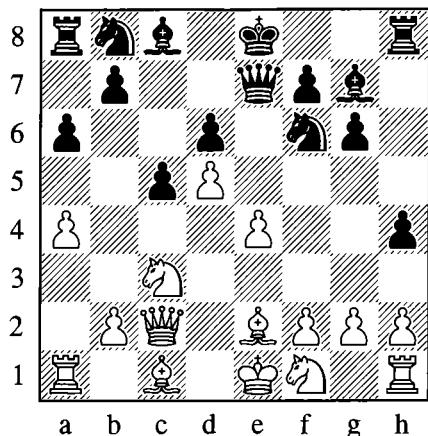
11.♗g5 allows Black to display one of the points behind his previous move: 11...♛e5! 12.♕d2 h4 13.♗f4?! ♛e7± 14.♗f1 h3 15.♗f3 hxg2 16.♗xg2 ♔h3 17.♗xh3 ♗xe4 18.♗xe4 ♛xe4† 19.♗e3 ♛xe3† 20.♗xe3 ♔xh3 and Black maintained slightly better chances in Dreev – Art. Minasian, Moscow 2009.

11...h4

I also considered 11...a5!N but after 12.♗g5 ♘a6 13.♗b5† ♔d7 14.0-0 ♘b4 15.♕d2 0-0± White's chances are higher.

12...Qf1

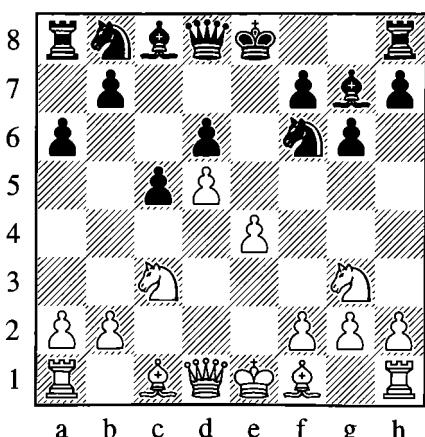
This position was reached in Perdomo – Rodi, Sao Paulo 2008, and here I propose:

**12...h3!?**
N 13.g3 Qbd7

The advance of the pawn to h3 will grant some stability to the knight on e5, as f3-f4 can be answered by ...Qg4. A possible continuation is:

**14.Qg5 Qe5 15.Qe3 Wc7 16.f4 Qeg4
17.Qxg4 Qxg4 18.f5 Qe5**

The computer favours White slightly, but both sides have certain weaknesses and I would call the position unclear.

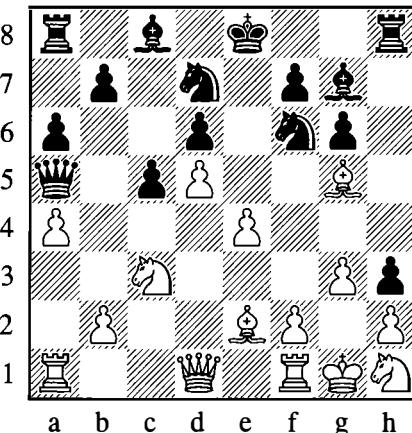
B) 8...a6

This time Black makes a few moves on the queenside before commencing his kingside play.

9.a4 Qbd7 10.Qe2 h5

10...0–0 reaches line C below, but for now we will concentrate on delaying castling.

11.Qg5 Wa5 12.0–0 h4 13.Qh1 h3 14.g3

**14...c4!?**
N

14...Qh7 was the expert's choice in P.H. Nielsen – Gashimov, Khanty-Mansiysk (4) 2011, but it did not work out well for Black. The text move leads to interesting complications.

15.Qxc4

15.Wc2 Qc5 16.Qxc4 Wb4 17.We2 Qfd7 18.Qf4 gives Black a choice between 18...Qb6 19.Qa2 Qbxa4 with complex play, and 18...Qe5 19.Qxe5 Qxe5 with ongoing compensation for the pawn.

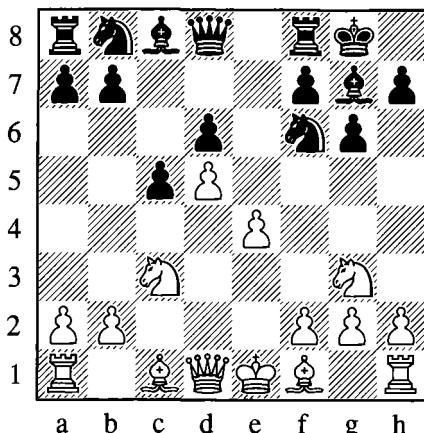
15...Wb4 16.Qb3

16.We2?? and 16.Wb3?? are both met by 16...Qe5 winning outright.

16...Qc5 17.Qc2 0–0–?

Black will capture one of the pawns on e4 or b2, maintaining a satisfactory position.

C) 8...0–0

**9.♗e2**

9.f3 and 9.♗d3 lead to Chapters 11 and 13 respectively.

9...a6 10.a4 ♘bd7 11.0–0

11.h4 has been played, but a kingside attack is unlikely to succeed here. The simplest reply is 11...h5N when the chances of White arranging a successful sacrifice on h5 are minimal, and if White changes plans and castles short then the h4-pawn will be weak.

11...♝e8 12.♗g5

Many other moves have been tried, but the text is the most common and natural, and is given by Schandorff.

12...h6 13.♗e3 ♜b8 14.♗d2 h5

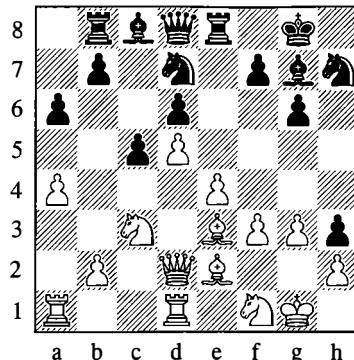
Black plays all the standard moves.

15.f3 ♘h7

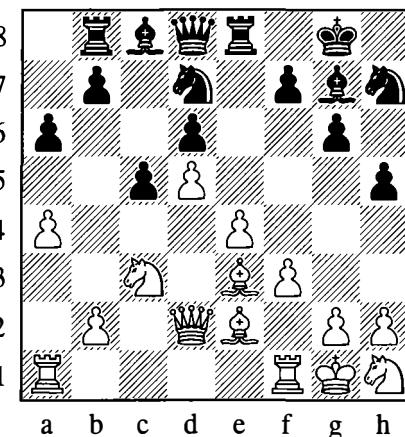
Now that White has played f2-f3 the position strongly resembles the previous chapter, although there are some subtle differences such as the knight's placement on g3 instead of c1.

16.♘h1

In another game White made room for the knight on f1 instead: 16.♗fd1 h4 17.♘f1 (17.♘h1 h3?) 17...h3 18.g3



This position was reached in Ivanchuk – Andreikin, Havana 2011, although in that game the move count was one higher. Whatever the move number, at this point Black can obtain a satisfactory, if still rather unclear position with 18...♞e5!N, as noted by Stohl.

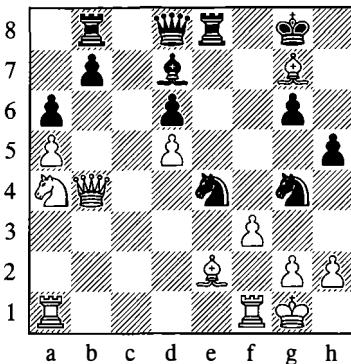
**16...♞e5 17.♗f2 ♜d7 18.a5 f5 19.b4?!**

The critical continuation is 19.♗fe1N, which Stohl rates as slightly better for White. This may be true although I do not believe it is anything serious, and Black is very much in the game after something like 19...♞f6 20.h3 fxe4 21.♗fxe4 ♜xe4 22.♗xe4 ♜f7 intending ...♞f5.

19...cx b4 20.♗a4 ♜b5

20...fxe4? leads to heavy complications and eventual equality: 21.♗xe4 ♜g4 22.♗d4

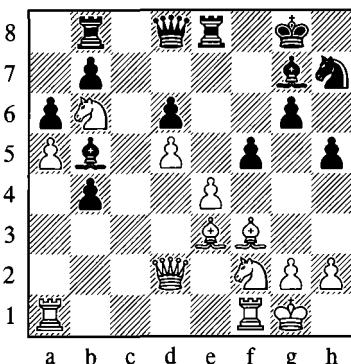
$\mathbb{Q}h6$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xb4$ (23. $\mathbb{Q}xd6?$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 26. $\mathbb{W}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 27. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 28. $f\text{x}g4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4\#$) 23... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$



24... $\mathbb{Q}xh2!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ $\mathbb{W}g5\#$
27. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{W}e3\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ =

21. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$

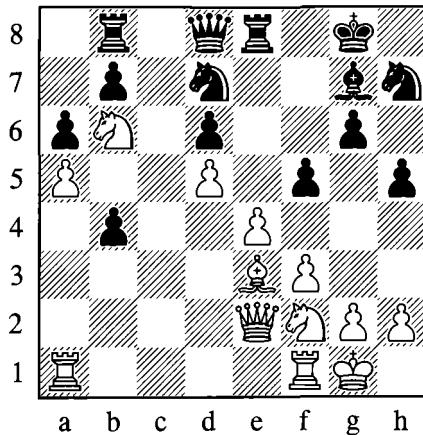
Another intriguing possibility is:
21... $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#N$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ (22. $gxf3?$ f4 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xal$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}xf4\#$)



22... $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ 23. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$

22. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7N$

22... $fxe4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ was decent for White in Bratanov – Petrov, Blagoevgrad 2010, although I eventually managed to get the better of the struggle.



23. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ f4 24. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{W}xb6$
26. $\mathbb{Q}e3\#$

White has sufficient compensation for the pawn, but nothing more.

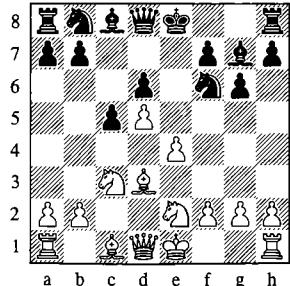
Conclusion

The 7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ line should be taken seriously, and Black must take care not to fall into an inferior version of the previous chapter. Of the three approaches examined here, the first two are tricky if slightly risky, while the third is more reliable yet still dynamic enough to lead to an interesting middlegame where both sides will have their chances.

Chapter 13

e4 Systems

7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ and 8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$



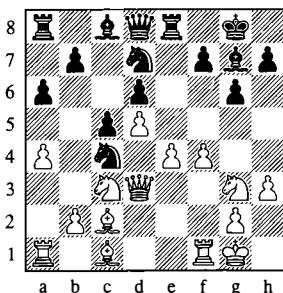
Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5. cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

8...0-0 9.0-0 a6 10.a4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

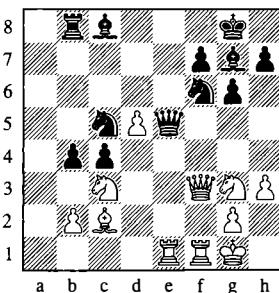
A) 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$	167
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C22) 13. h3 $\mathbb{Q}b8$	175
C221) 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$	175
C222) 14. $\mathbb{W}f3$ c4 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b5 16. axb5 axb5	
17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. e5 dxe5 19. fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ b4!?	178
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C1) after 15. $\mathbb{W}d3$!?



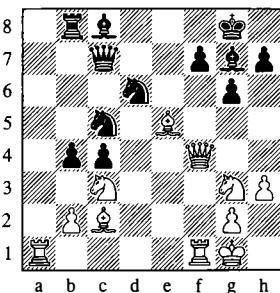
15... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$!N

C2221) after 22. $\mathbb{Q}ael$



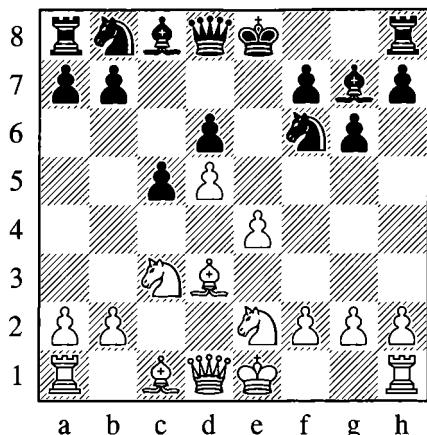
22... $\mathbb{W}c7$!N

C2222) after 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$



23... $\mathbb{Q}d3$!N

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$



This is an aggressive system based on the following attacking scheme. After castling White intends to place the knight on g3 and advance with f2-f4, threatening e4-e5. If Black overprotects the e5-square, then White will push with e4-e5 anyway, meeting ...dxe5 with f4-f5 (although we will see some cases, including the main line, where a sacrifice with fxe5 is played instead). If timed correctly, this pawn sacrifice combined with a bishop on g5, rook on the f-file and knight on e4, not to mention the dynamic potential of the passed d-pawn, could lead to a devastating attack.

Fortunately there is no need to sink into despair just yet. White's entire set-up is geared towards the e4-e5 break, usually connected with a pawn sacrifice (involving either f4-f5 or fxe5), so the first good thing is that we know exactly what is coming. The attack will take a good deal of time to prepare, and the presence of the knight on g3 (compared with d2 in the Classical Variation) makes it easier for Black to obtain counterplay with moves like ...c4, ...b5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

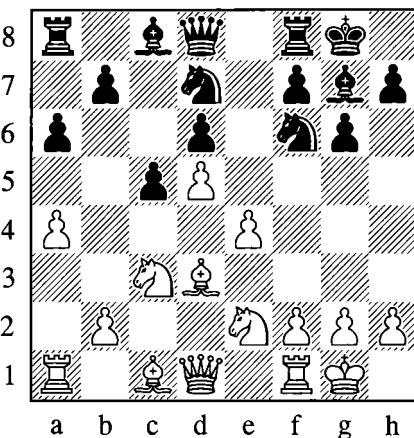
Summing up, both sides have concrete plans and in the sharpest lines a single tempo could prove decisive.

8...0-0 9.0-0 a6

This is the most common move order. 9... $\mathbb{E}e8$ and 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ are both quite playable, although in most cases ...a6 and a2-a4 will be played anyway within the next few moves. 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ is another option, but I don't like it very much.

10.a4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

Sometimes Black plays 10... $\mathbb{E}e8$ first, but the knight has nowhere to go apart from d7, so we may as well play that move first.



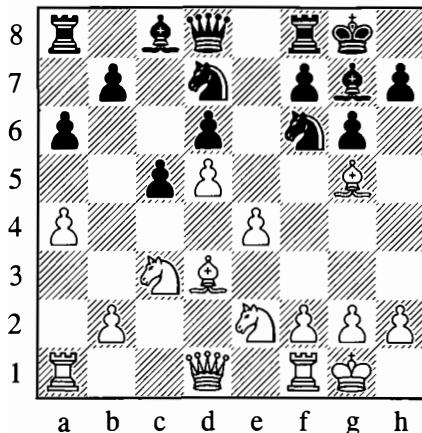
From this position we will examine three main options: A) 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$, B) 11.h3 and C) 11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$.

11.f3 reaches a strange form of Kapengut System, and after 11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ Black had good prospects in Marinelli – Martorelli, Chianciano 1990.

11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ does not make a great deal of sense, as after 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ White's bishop is left blocking his main attacking plan involving f2-f4.

11.f4 $\mathbb{E}e8$ (11... $\mathbb{W}c7$! can also be considered)
12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ transposes to line C2 on page 173.

A) 11.♗g5



11...♝e8

I think it is worth playing this move, and I have recommended it in most of the lines featured in this chapter. Nevertheless Black can also consider the immediate 11...♞e5 with similar ideas as in the main line below.

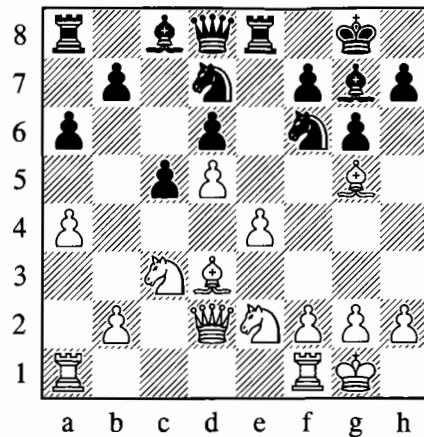
12.♗d2

White has tried several other moves, but in most cases Black's basic plan will remain the same: the knight will come to e5, and later c4 and a5 if and when it becomes appropriate. Combined with his typical queenside play with ...♝d7 and ...b5, this should ensure good chances. Here are a few alternatives:

12.♗g3 is covered on page 172 – see the 12.♗g5 line in the notes to variation C.

12.f4? is premature due to 12...c4! 13.♗xc4 ♜b6† 14.♗h1 ♜g4† Parr – Pritchard, York 1959.

12.h3 ♞e5 13.♗c2 h6 14.♗e3 ♞c4 15.♗c1 Now in Sagalchik – Epstein, San Diego 2004, Black could have obtained good prospects with 15...♝d7N 16.b3 ♞a5. The knight has arrived at his destination and ...b5 is on the way.

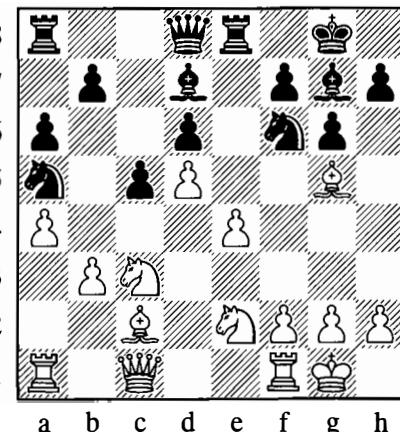


12...♞e5 13.♗c2 ♞c4

The knight was not forced to move immediately, but it is tempting to gain a tempo against the queen.

14.♗c1 ♛d7 15.b3 ♞a5

The knight is well placed here in this line. Now ...b5 is inevitable.



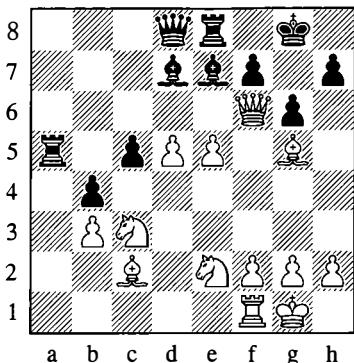
16.♗f4

16.♗b1 occurred in Sadler – Kempinski, Germany 2003, and here I would suggest: 16...b5 17.axb5 axb5 18.b4 cxb4 19.♗xb4 ♞c4 20.♗d3 ♜a5 21.♗b1 ♜ec8=

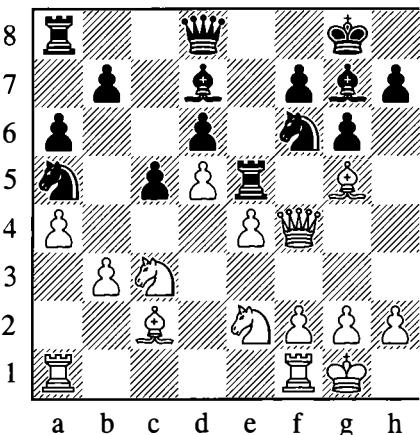
16...♝e5

Another interesting line is 16...b5?N 17.axb5 axb5 with the possible continuation:

18. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ b4 19. $\mathbb{E}xa5$ $\mathbb{E}xa5$ 20. e5 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$



22. $\mathbb{W}xe7$ (22. $\mathbb{Q}e4?$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8-$)
22... $\mathbb{E}xe7$ 23. d6 bxc3 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ c4 25. dxe7 $\mathbb{W}c8\#$. White's enterprising sacrifice has not quite provided enough compensation for the queen.



17. $\mathbb{W}d2??$

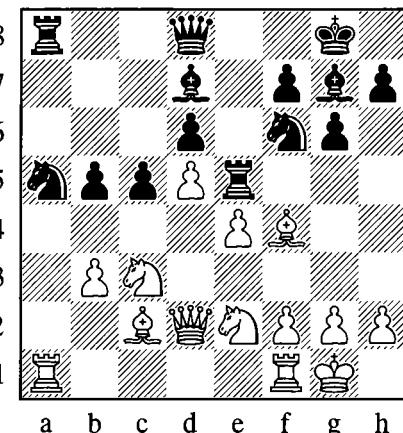
This feeble retreat hands Black the initiative. Of course the point of Black's move was to meet 17. $\mathbb{W}h4??$ with 17... h6!.

Instead White could have kept the game unclear with a move like 17. $\mathbb{E}ab1$, bearing in mind that ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ tricks will not work due to the hanging knight on a5.

17... b5 18. axb5 axb5 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4??$

19. f4N $\mathbb{E}e8$ 20. e5 dxe5 21. fxe5 $\mathbb{E}xe5$

22. $\mathbb{W}f4$ $\mathbb{E}xg5$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ leaves Black with more than enough play for the exchange, but the position remains complicated. After the text move the play becomes one-sided.



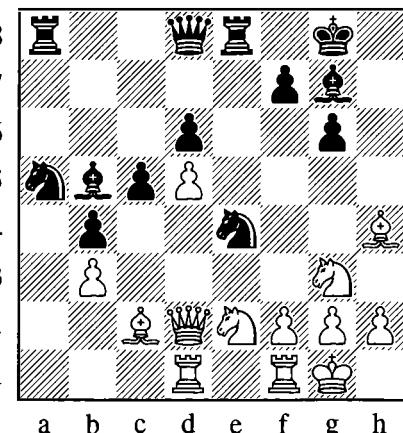
19... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ b4 21. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 22. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ h5#

Black managed to carry out all his ideas, and White faces problems all across the board.

23. $\mathbb{Q}g5?$

23. h4N $\mathbb{Q}g4\#$

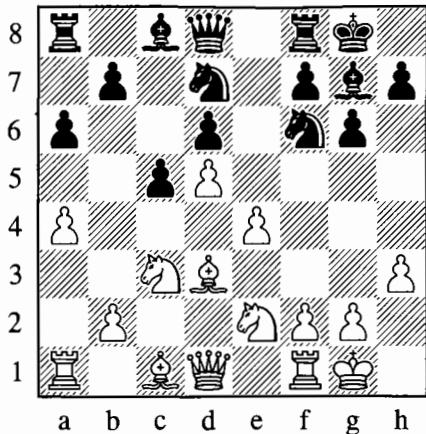
23... h4! 24. $\mathbb{E}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$



25. $\mathbb{W}f4??$ g5 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{E}xd8$

28. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3+$

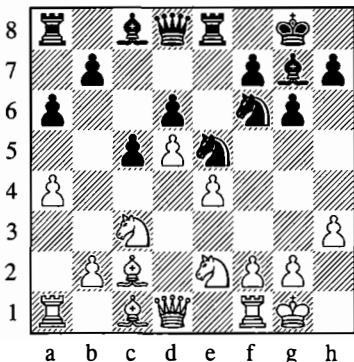
Chatalbashev – Banikas, Kallithea 2009.

B) 11.h3

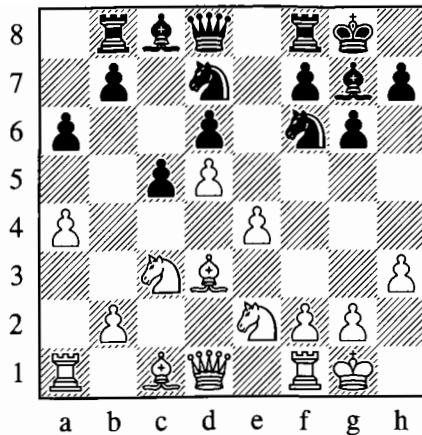
This has been White's most common choice in the position. Before launching into an attack he guards against any invasions on the g4-square.

11...♝b8

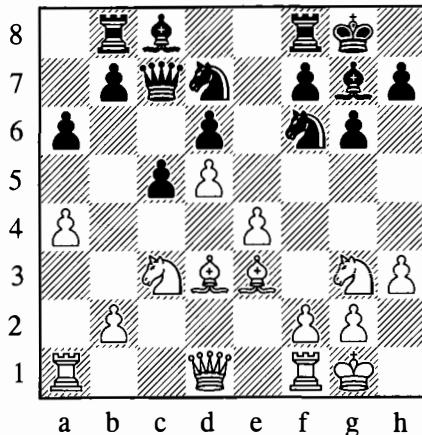
Black can also adopt the same strategy that we saw in the previous line: 11...♞e5!? This has only rarely been played, but it looks good to me. The knight is going to the end of the world, at least on the chess board. 12.♗c2 ♜e8



13.f4!? (13.♗g3 transposes to variation C1, which can be found later in the chapter on page 172.) The text move was played in Manzone – Bittelmajer, Argentina 2001, and here I am not sure why Black refrained from the consistent 13...♞c4N 14.♗g3 ♜d7 when he would have been doing fine.

**12.♗g3**

12.f4 is the other major option, and after 12...♜c7 13.♗e3 ♜e8 14.♗g3 we reach line C221 on page 175.

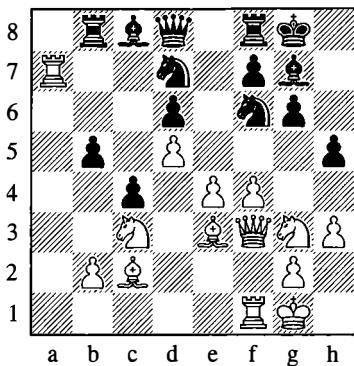
12...♜c7 13.♗e3**13...h5!?**

This leads to a sharp and double-edged fight. The fact that it has only occurred in a couple of practical encounters makes it all the more intriguing.

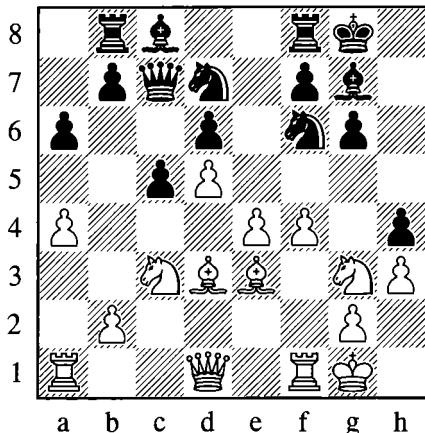
I should mention that 13...♜e8 is a valid option, and after 14.f4 we have the same transposition to line C221 as was noted at move 12.

14.f4 h4

14...c4!N 15.Qc2 b5 16.axb5 axb5 is also possible, for example: 17.Qa7 Qd8 18.Qf3 Now Black's pawns gather momentum.



18...b4 19.Qce2 b3 20.Qb1 h4 21.Qh1 Qb7 Having driven White's minor pieces backwards, Black now removes the strong enemy rook. In my opinion Black is not worse.

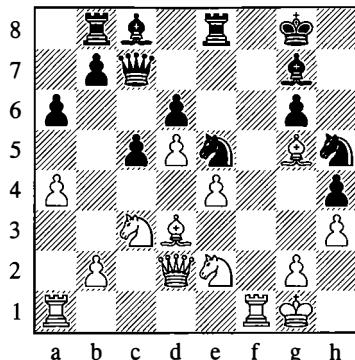


15.Qge2 Qe8 16.Qe1

In such a tense position other moves are of course possible. Here are a few brief lines I checked:

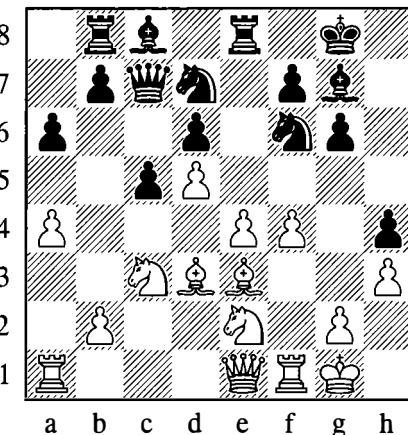
16.Qf2N c4 17.Qc2 Qc5 18.e5 dxe5 19.fxe5 Qxe5

16.f5!N is aggressive, but Black seems to be holding his own: 16...Qh5 17.fxg6 fxg6 18.Qd2 Qe5 19.Qg5



19...b5!? Who counts pawns in such a position? (19...Qf8 is also possible, based on the following point: 20.Qxh4?! [20.Qxf8†=] 20...Qxh3! 21.gxh3? Qf3! 22.Qc2 Qd7–+) 20.axb5 Qxd3 21.Qxd3 axb5 22.Qxh4 b4 23.Qd1 Qd7≈ Black's bishops are excellent.

The text move is also quite challenging. White wants to capture the h4-pawn, so Black must take immediate action. Fortunately he has more than one satisfactory solution.



16...c4

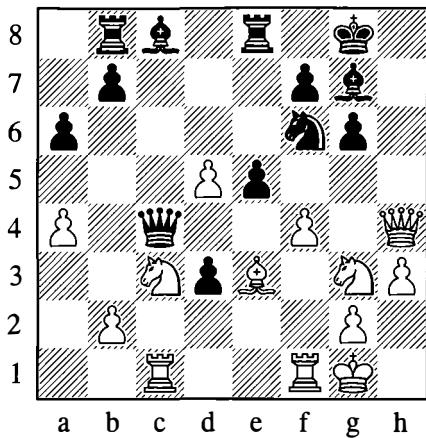
16...Qxe4!N is another obvious candidate, which may appeal to aggressive players. 17.Qxe4 (17.Qxe4? Qf6†) 17...f5 18.Qxh4 fxe4 19.Qc2 Qb6≈ Black has a good position.

17.Qc2 Qc5 18.e5 Qd3 19.Qxh4 dxe5

20.♗xd3?!

Better is 20.fxe5N ♜xe5 21.♗d4 ♜h5, although I believe Black is at least equal here too.

20...cxd3 21.♗g3 ♜c4 22.♗acl



22...♗xd5!N

This should eventually secure an advantage, although both sides will have to navigate some amazing complications along the way.

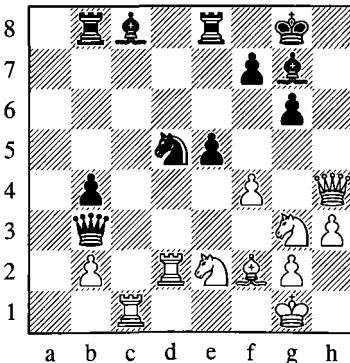
It's worth seeing the end of the game as well:

22...d2 23.♗cd1?!

23.♗xd2N=

23...b5 24.axb5 axb5 25.♗xd2 b4 26.♗ce2
♗xd5 27.♗c1 ♜b3 28.♗f2

Dumitrache – Chatalbashev, Agneaux 2004.
Here Black could have tried:



28...exf4N

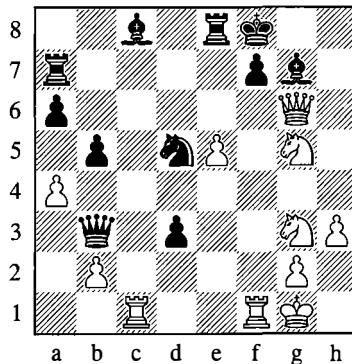
The game ended 28...♗f6 ½–½ in view of 29.♗h6 ♜g7= with a repetition of moves.

29.♗xf4 ♜xf4 30.♗xf4 ♜b7=

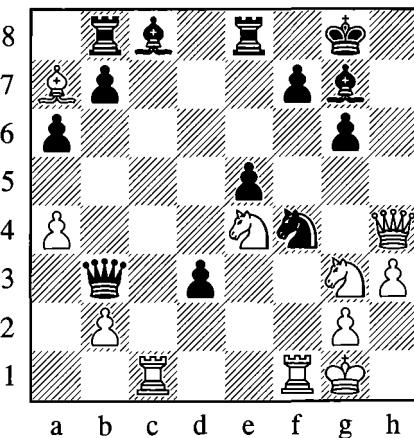
Black's bishops should offer him somewhat better chances.

23.♗ce4 ♜b3 24.♗a7 ♜xf4?!

24...♗a8 25.fxe5 ♜xa7 26.♗g5 is bizarrely equal. The elegant finish might be: 26...b5 27.♗h7† ♜f8 28.♗xg6!



28...♗f6! 29.♗xf6 d2! 30.♗ff1! dxcl=♗
31.♗h7† ♜g8 32.♗f6† ♜f8=



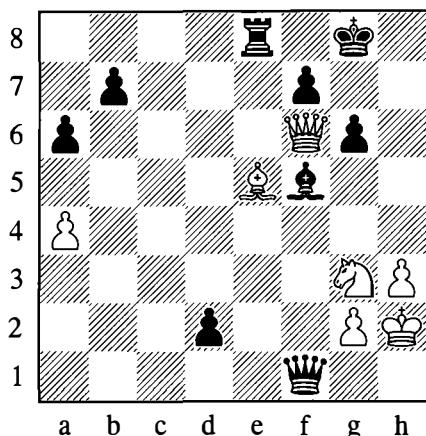
25.♗xb8 ♜xb2 26.♗xf4

26.♗f2? ♜d4 27.♗h2 ♜d7 28.♗c7 f5+–

26...♗xc1† 27.♗f1 d2

White is under serious pressure and must play precisely just to reach an inferior endgame.

28.♕f6† ♜xf6 29.♗xf6 ♜f5 30.♔h2! ♜xf1
31.♕xe5



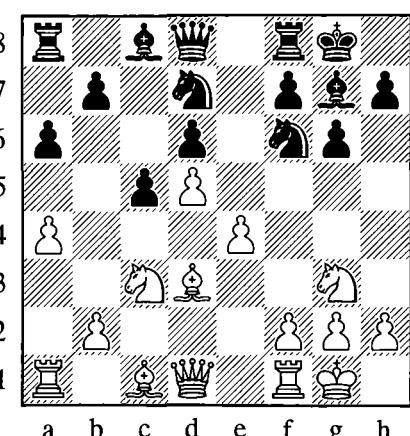
31...♜xe5

The spectacular 31...♝g1†?! is reasonable, if not a real improvement: 32.♕xg1 d1=♛† 33.♔h2 ♜xe5 34.♗xe5 ♜xa4 35.♗b8† ♔h7 36.♕xf5 gx5 37.♗xb7†

32.♗d8† ♜e8! 33.♗xe8† ♔g7 34.♗e5† ♔h7 35.♕xf1 d1=♛

Black keeps an extra pawn and some winning chances.

C) 11.♕g3



11...♜e8

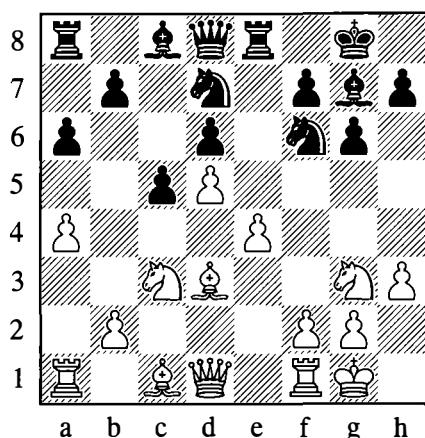
Once again I favour this rook development.

11...♝e5 is playable although White may be tempted to consider 12.♔e2?!, losing a tempo with the bishop but hoping to regain it with interest after a subsequent f2-f4.

After the text move White has two main options: C1) 12.h3 and C2) 12.f4.

12.♔g5 ♜c7 13.♗d2 c4 14.♔e2 occurred in Chatalbashev – Melnikova, Sautron 2006, and now after 14...♝c5N 15.♔xc4 ♜cxe4 16.♗gxe4 ♜xe4 17.♗xe4 ♜xe4= Black is fine.

C1) 12.h3



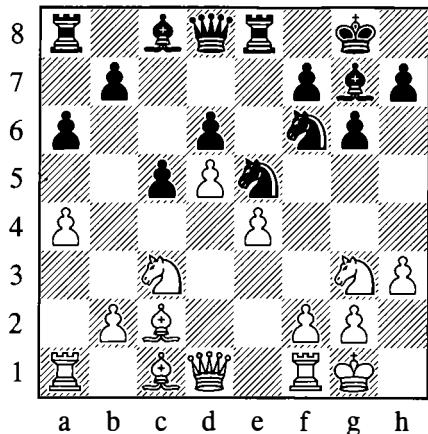
12...♝e5?!

It is important to mention that 12...♝c7 is perfectly fine, and is likely to transpose to variation C22 below after White plays f2-f4.

13.♔c2

13.♔e2?! has been played in a few games, and here 13...♝c7N looks like a sensible response. Compared with the 11...♝e5 12.♔e2 line mentioned on the previous move, here White has invested a tempo on h2-h3, so I do not see much for Black to fear.

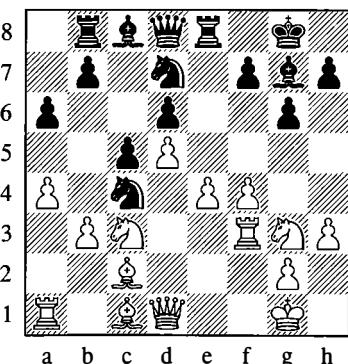
The position after the text move can also arise via variation B with 11.h3 – see the note on page 169 with 11...♝e5?! 12.♔c2 ♜e8, after which 13.♕g3 reaches the present position.



13...♝fd7 14.f4 ♜c4 15.♗d3?!

White should try something else here, although I think Black is okay in any case. His plans include ...♝d7 (or ...♝b8) preparing ...b5, and/or ...♝a5 with ideas of ...c4 and ...♝c5, with enough queenside counterplay to keep White from executing his kingside attack unhindered.

Before seeing the problem with the main move, it is worth mentioning the only other practical encounter on the database: 15.♝f3 A. Roberts – Flores Gutierrez, corr. 1995. 15...♝b8N 16.b3 Most other moves can be met by ...♝a5 followed by ...b5.

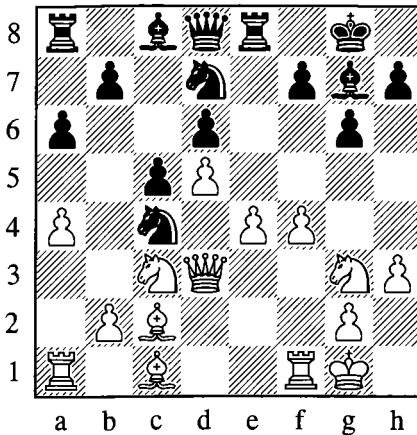


16...♝d4†?! (16...♝a5=) 17.♝h1 ♜ce5?!

18.fxe5 ♜xe5≈

The text move occurred in Aleshin – Lubbe,

Pardubice 2006. At this point Black missed a tactical opportunity:



15...♝xb2!N

The game continuation of 15...♝a5 was only good enough for equality.

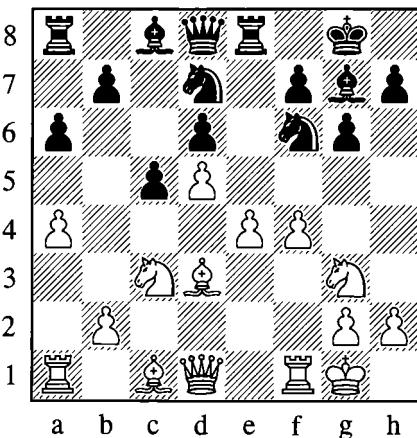
16.♝xb2 ♜b6

Now White must find some good moves just to stay in the game.

17.a5 ♜xb2 18.♝ge2 c4 19.♝xc4 b5 20.axb6 ♜xb6† 21.♝h1 ♜c5†

Black's powerful dark-squared bishop ensures his advantage.

C2) 12.f4



With this direct move White refuses to give the knight another chance to come to e5. On the negative side, White loses the option of developing the bishop to g5, for the moment at least.

12... $\mathbb{W}c7$

Now the two main moves are C21) 13. $\mathbb{W}f3$ and C22) 13.h3.

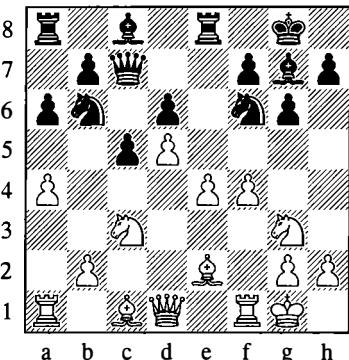
13. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$?

With this rare move White blocks the ...c4 advance.

13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Chasing the bishop away seems logical.

14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



14... $\mathbb{Q}bd7!?$ N

Insisting on ...c4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, even if the first move no longer gains a tempo.

14... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$ 15.a5 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 16.f5 gave White some initiative in Chatalbashev – Moradiabadi, Peristeri 2010.

15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

15. $\mathbb{Q}c4=$ repeats the position.

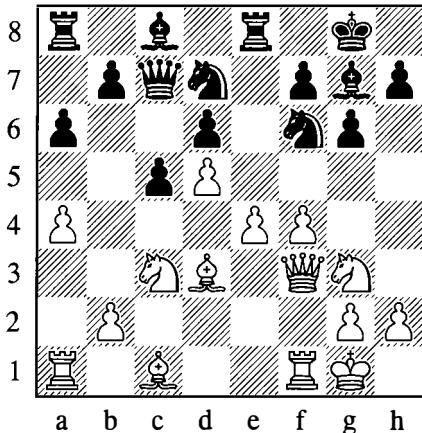
15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ allows the typical trick 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$

16. $\mathbb{Q}cxe4$ f5 when Black is at least equal.

15...c4??

Intending ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$, with typical Benoni counterplay.

C21) 13. $\mathbb{W}f3$



This move has scored quite highly and seems like a logical attempt to do without h2-h3.

13...c4 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{B}b8$

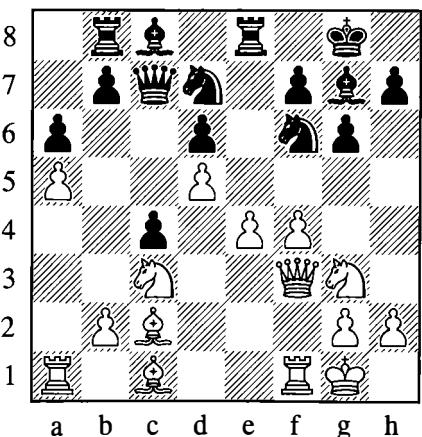
ECO evaluates this as unclear, but obviously we should investigate the position in more depth.

15.a5!N

This untested move is possibly the most challenging.

15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 16.h3 b5 17.axb5 axb5 transposes to line C222 below.

In one game White tried the immediate sacrifice: 15.e5 dxe5 16.f5 $\mathbb{B}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ Wehnert – Espig, Weimar 1968, and now 17... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ N would have been okay for Black, whose ideas include ... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (or ... $\mathbb{Q}b3-d4$), not to mention ...b5 at some point.



15...Qc5!

Taking control of a4 before advancing the b-pawn. 15...b5 16.axb6 Qxb6 17.Qa4 is less clear.

16.h3

It is natural to cover the g4-square. White can also try taking immediate action:

16.e5 dxe5 17.f5 b5 18.axb6 Qxb6 is not bad for Black at all.

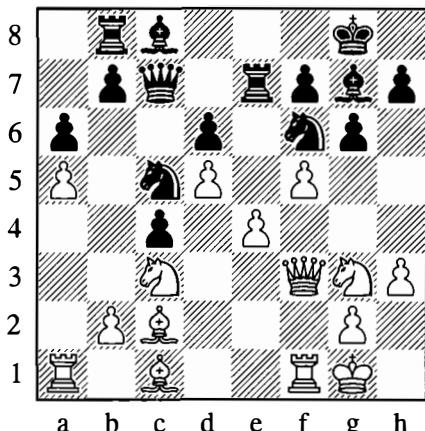
16.f5 b5 17.axb6 Qxb6 18.Qh1 (18.fxg6 fxg6) 18...Qc7 Black intends ...Qcd7-e5 with a good game.

16...Rxe7!

It is useful to cover f7.

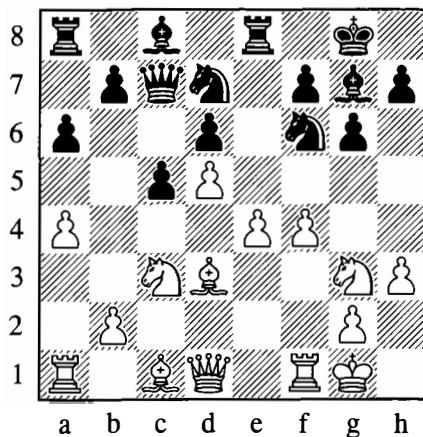
17.f5

17.e5 dxe5 18.f5 Qd7 is unclear but not worse for Black in my view.

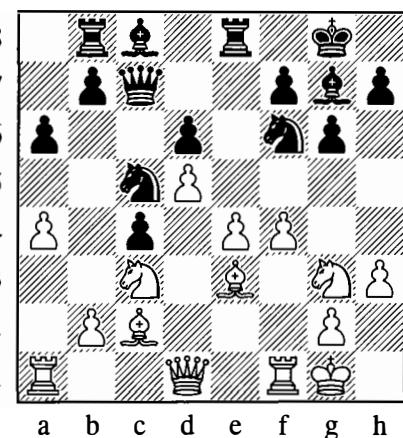


17...Qfd7 18.Qe3 b5 19.axb6 Qxb6 20.Rab1 Rb4 21.Qf2 Qd3 22.Qxd3 cxd3

Like many other variations in the present chapter, this whole line is complicated but I think Black is holding his own.

C22) 13.h3**13...Rb8**

We have arrived at a popular position which can be reached via several different move orders. At this point we reach an important division between C221) 14.Qe3 and C222) 14.Qf3.

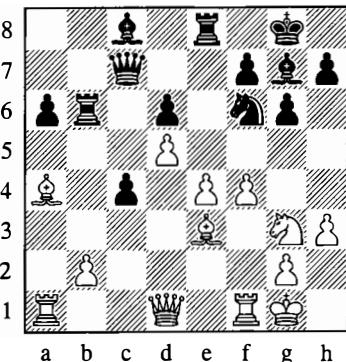
C221) 14.Qe3 c4 15.Qc2 Qc5**16.Qd4**

16.Qf3 b5 17.axb5 axb5 transposes to variation C222 on page 178.

Another option is:

16.a5 b5 17.axb6 Qxb6 18.Qa4 Qxa4 19.Qxa4

Now Black must decide which rook should sacrifice its life for an enemy bishop.



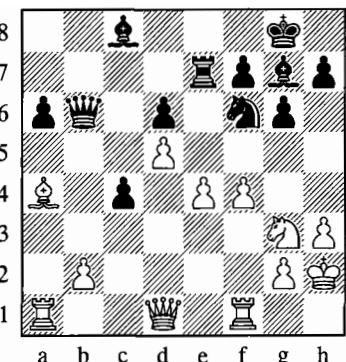
19...Bf7!N

The dark-squared bishop is the one we want to eliminate.

19...Qxe4? is too optimistic: 20.Qxe8 Qxg3 21.Qf3! It is important to drive the knight away from the king. (21.Qe1? Bxb2† Spassov – Petrov, Sofia 2009.) 21...Qf5 22.Qxb6 Qxb6† 23.Qh2 Qxb2 (23...Qh4 24.Qc1 Qxf3† 25.Qxf3 Qc5 26.Qe2 c3±) 24.Qb1± Leitao – Bachmann Schiavo, Sao Paulo 2006.

20.Qxb6 Qxb6†∞ 21.Qh2

21.Qh1 Qxe4 22.Qxe4 Bxe4 23.Qc2 f5=



21...h5 22.e5 h4!?

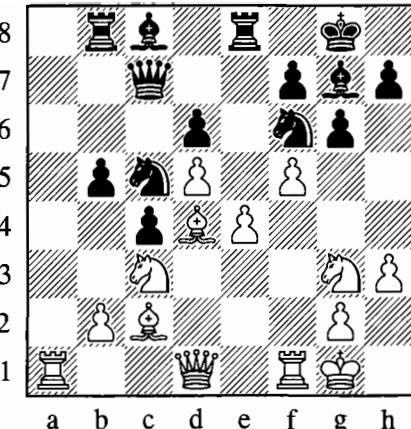
22...dxe5 23.d6 Be6 24.d7 Qxd7 25.f5∞
23.Qe2 dxe5 24.d6 Be6∞

Black is not worse.

16...b5 17.axb5 axb5 18.f5

18.e5 Qfd7?! (18...dxe5 19.fxe5 Bxe5
20.Qf3 transposes to line C222; see page 179

for the continuation after 20...b4?) 19.exd6 Qxd6 20.Qxg7 Qxg7 21.Qce4 Qxe4 22.Qxe4 Qb6† 23.Qh2 Qf6 24.Qxf6 Qxf6† Paradella – Letelier Martner, Mar del Plata 1973.



18...g5

This natural move has been the usual choice, but it is not the only viable continuation.

The untested 18...We7?!N looks quite playable, for instance: 19.Qf3 Qcd7 20.Qa7 b4 21.Qce2 Qe5 22.Qf4 Qb7=

19.Qc1

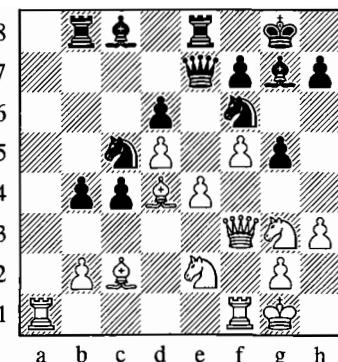
The other queen move is unconvincing:
19.Qf3?! b4 20.Qce2

Here Black has a few good moves.

20...We7

20...Qh8?!N 21.Qh5?! Qcxe4∞

20...c3?!N 21.bxc3 b3 22.Qd3 b2 23.Qab1 h6∞

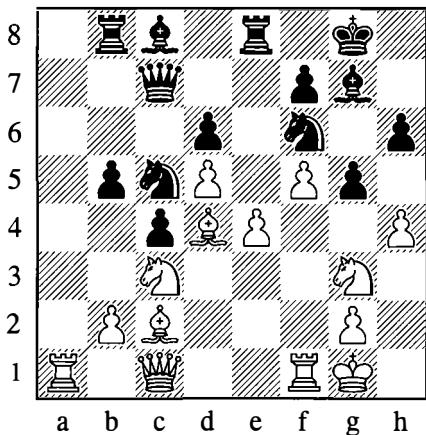


21.♗h5 ♗xh5 22.♗xh5 f6∞

Black was okay in V. Georgiev – Nedev, Plovdiv 2011, and he could have done even better with one of the alternatives noted above at move 20.

19...h6 20.h4

Here Black needs to choose carefully.



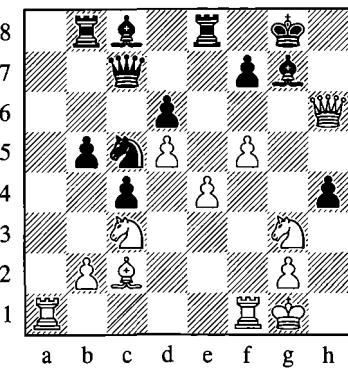
20...♘d3!?

20...b4? 21.hxg5 bxc3 22.gxf6 gave White a decisive attack in Dicker – Marcotulli, e-mail 2002. (White went wrong with 22.bxc3? in Knaak – Bangiev, Bremen 1998, and eventually lost a wild back-and-forth game.)

20...gxh4!?N

This untested move is a viable alternative to the main line.

21.♗xf6 ♗xf6 22.♗xh6 ♗g7
22...♗d4†? 23.♗h1 hxg3 24.f6+–

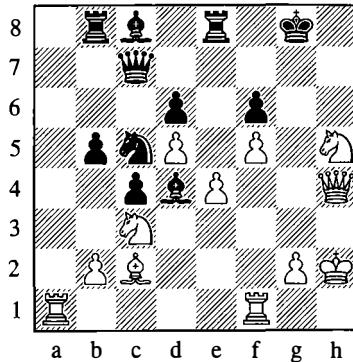


23.♗xh4 ♗d4† 24.♗h2 f6

Cementing the dark squares.

25.♗h5

25.♗f4 ♗e7 26.♗g4† ♗g7 27.♗h5 ♗xg4
28.♗xg4† ♗f8–



25...♗h7 26.♗f3 ♗e5†

The bishop is the best-placed piece on the board.

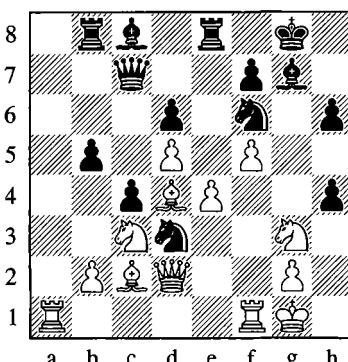
27.♗g1 ♗f7

Black has some initiative in this complex position.

21.♗xd3N

This is the obvious answer, and presumably the reason why the knight jump to d3 was rejected in the games mentioned in the note to the previous move.

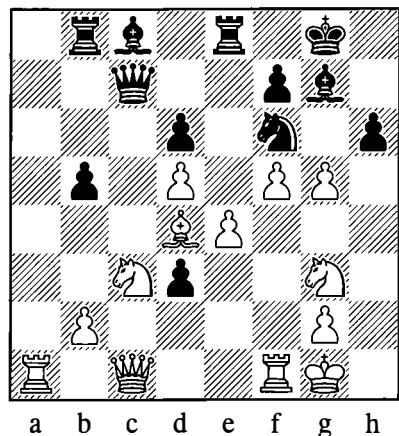
21.♗d2 has been played in one game, and here I suggest: 21...gxh4!?N (21...b4 22.hxg5 bxc3 23.♗xc3 ♗xe4 24.♗xe4 ♗xe4 25.f6 [25.♗xg7? ♗c5† 26.♗h2 ♗e3–+] 25...♗f8∞ Hegoburu – Salanin, e-mail 2005.)



22.♕xd3 ♠ hxg3 23.♗c2 b4 24.♗e2 ♦xe4
 25.♗xe4 ♜xe4 26.f6 ♜f8 27.♗xg3 c3 28.bxc3
 bxc3†

21...cx d3 22.hx g5

At first Black's position looks desperate, but he has a clever rejoinder.



22... ♦xe4!

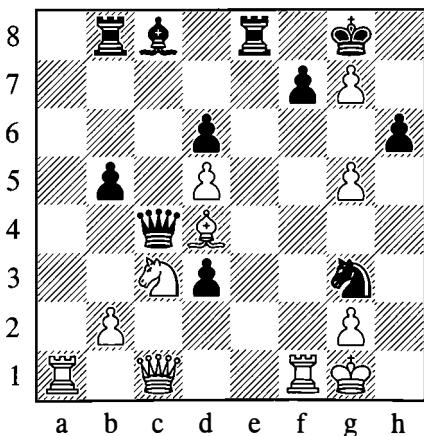
Launching a counterattack.

23.f6!

23.♗xg7? d2 24.♗c2 ♦xg3 25.gxh6 ♜c5†
 26.♗h2 ♦xf1† 27.♗xf1 ♜e3†

23... ♦xg3 24.♗xg7 ♜c4

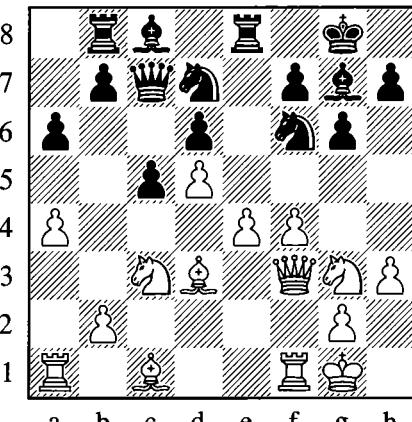
24... ♜xc3?! is not a great idea, as after
 25.♗xc3 ♦e2† 26.♗h2 ♦xc1 27.♗axc1 hxg5
 28.♗f3 ♜e4 29.♗xd3 the g7-pawn means Black
 will have to be slightly careful in this endgame.



25.♗f4 ♜f5 26.♗f6 ♜xf4 27.♗xf4 hxg5
 28.♗xg5 ♜xg7 29.♗g4 ♜h6 30.♗g3 ♜g4∞

Black is at least not worse in this complex endgame. We have witnessed some wild complications in this line, but ultimately I think the positions are just as risky for White as they are for Black.

C222) 14.♗f3



14...c4 15.♗c2 b5 16.axb5 axb5 17.♗e3

This position can also be reached via a 14.♗e3 move order if White follows up with ♗f3.

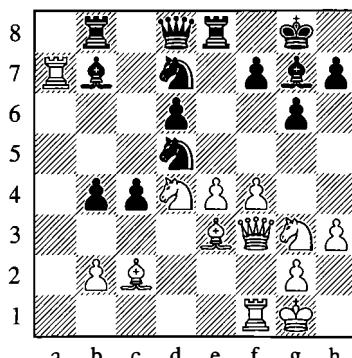
17... ♜c5

17...b4!?

This move has been less popular, but I think it is okay for Black, and could be considered as a valid alternative to the main line. Here is a sample continuation:

18.♗a7 ♜d8 19.♗ce2 ♜b7 20.♗d4 ♜xd5

20... ♜c5?! 21.f5N ♜b6→



21.♗xb7

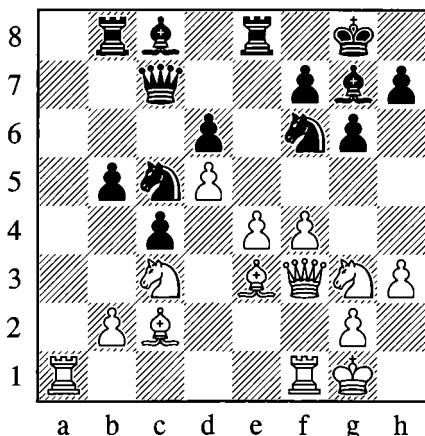
21.exd5? ♜xe3! 22.♗xe3 ♜b6 23.♗df5 ♜xe3† 24.♗xe3 ♜d4† Louis – Moeldner, Deidesheim 2000.

21...♗xb7 22.exd5

Lütz – Norwood, Arnhem 1987.

22...b3N 23.♗b1 ♜c5?

After the text move both sides have mobilized their pieces just the way they wanted, so the stage is set for a bloodthirsty battle!

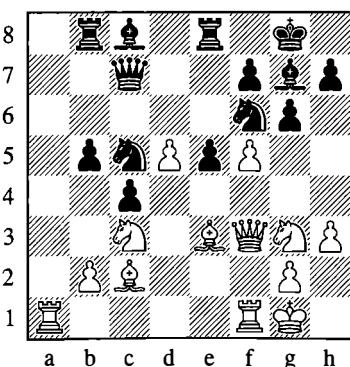


18.e5

With ...b4 coming, Black is poised to take over the initiative so White cannot afford to hesitate.

18...dxe5 19.fxe5

The thematic 19.f5? is just a mistake here:



19...e4! 20.♗gxe4 ♜cxe4 21.♗xe4 ♜xd5 22.fxg6 hxg6 23.♗a7 ♜b7† Gayer – Schmidt, Germany 1995.

19...♗xe5

We have reached one of the critical positions of this line, which has been tested in over thirty games.

20.♗d4

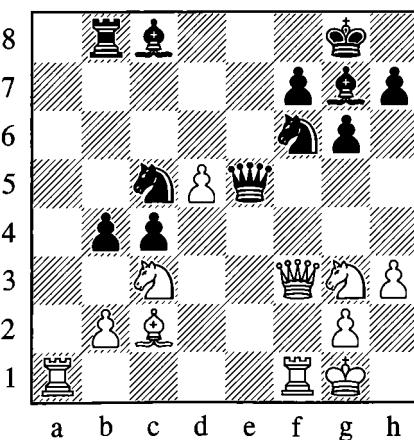
The most popular move, and the best.

20.♗f4?! blocks the f-file, allowing the following strong reply: 20...♗fd7! 21.♗h1 b4 22.♗ce4 b3† Chatalbashev – Pantsulaia, Izmir 2002.

20...b4!?

According to the database the more popular 20...♗g5 has appeared in thirty games, while the text move has occurred in just three. Nevertheless I have found it to be just as promising as the main line. In this highly complex position it is worth analysing both C2221) 21.♗xe5 and C2222) 21.♗f4.

C2221) 21.♗xe5 ♜xe5



With a pawn plus some initiative for the exchange, Black should be at least equal here.

22.♕ae1

The alternative is:

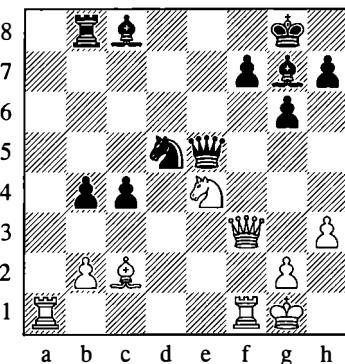
22.♕ce4 ♕cxe4 23.♕xe4

Now Black has a choice between keeping the game complicated and going for simplifications.

23...♗xd5

A relatively simple drawing line is: 23...b3N

24.♕xf6† ♕xf6 25.♕xf6 ♕xf6 26.♕xf6 bxc2
27.♕c6 ♕f5 28.♕xc4 ♕xb2 29.♕e1!=

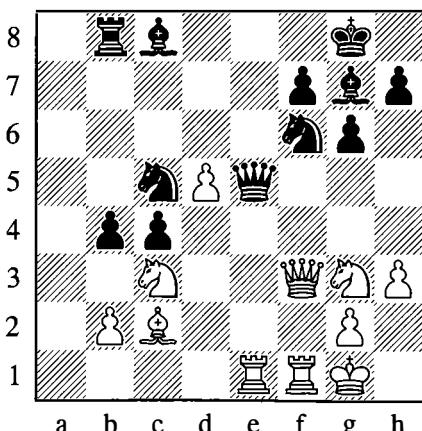


24.♕xf7† ♕h8 25.♕g5 ♕d7N

25...♕e3?? occurred in Vinot – Haik, France 1987, and now the clever 26.♕a5!N would have won on the spot.

26.♕f8† ♕xf8 27.♕f7† ♕g8 28.♕xe5 ♕b5
29.♕a4 ♕xa4 30.♕xa4 ♕c8=

Black's strong queenside pawns give him adequate compensation for the exchange.

**22...♗c7!N**

This retreat is far from obvious, which explains why it was not played in any of the three games to have reached the previous position. According to my analysis however, it sets White the most problems.

22...♗d4†

Although this is not my first choice, it is not a bad move and should eventually lead to equality as follows:

23.♔h1 ♕xh3

23...♕b7 24.♕ce4=

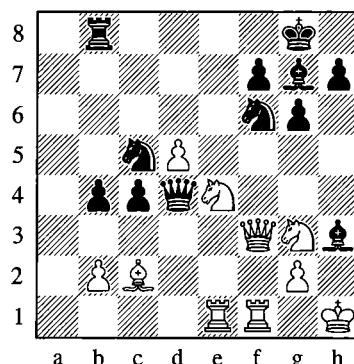
23...bxc3 24.♕e8† ♕f8 25.♕h5 gxh5
26.♕g3† ♕g4∞

24.♕ce4

24.♕ce2? ♕xb2+ Kasparov – Rachels, New York (simul) 1988.

24.gxh3?!N bxc3 25.bxc3 ♕xd5 26.♕e4
♕cxe4 27.♕xe4 ♕xe4 28.♕xe4=

The text move was played in Cording – Lobron, Germany 1982. Here I analysed the following line:



24...♕fxe4N 25.♕xf7† ♕h8 26.♕xe4 ♕f5
27.♕c7 ♕c8 28.♕f4 b3 29.♕d6 ♕xf4 30.♕xf4
bxc2 31.♕xc4 ♕b8 32.♕xf5 ♕d3 33.♕f1
c1=♕ 34.♕xc1 ♕xc1 35.♕xg7 ♕xg7 36.♕xc1
♕xb2=

23.♕ce4

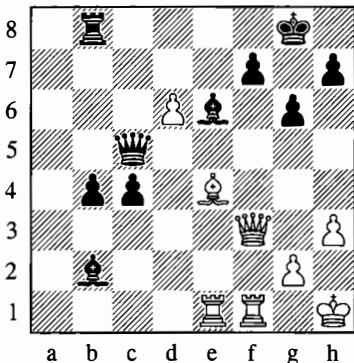
After 23.d6 ♕a7! 24.♕e7 ♕cd7† 25.♔h2
bxc3 26.bxc3 ♕a8 27.♕e8† ♕f8= Black has

reasonable chances to make his two minor pieces count against White's rook.

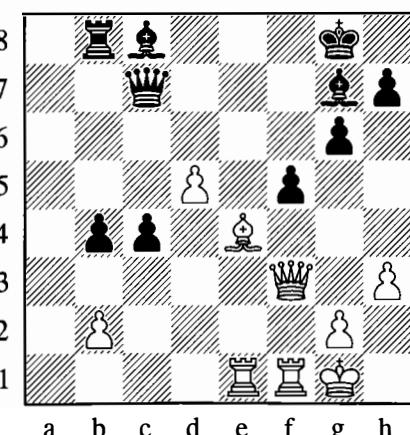
23...♗fxe4 24.♗xe4 ♗xe4 25.♕xe4 f5!

This enables Black to keep some winning chances alive.

The following alternative leads to equality after accurate play: 25...♖xb2 26.d6 ♖c5† 27.♗h1 ♖e6



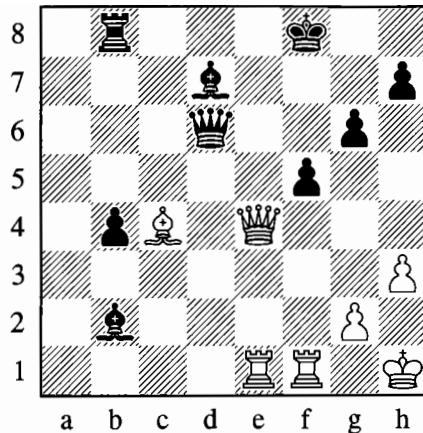
28.♕xg6! hxg6 29.♗xe6 fxe6 30.♗f7† ♖h8
 31.♗xg6 ♖g7 (31...♗xd6 32.♗h6† ♖g8
 33.♗g6† ♖g7 34.♗f7† ♖h7 35.♗h5†=)
 32.d7 ♖e5 33.♗e8† ♖h7 34.d8=♖ ♖xd8
 35.♖xd8 ♖e4 36.♗a5 ♖e2 37.♗c1 b3 38.♗e1
 ♖d3 39.♗h5†=



26.d6□

26.♕b1? ♖b7†

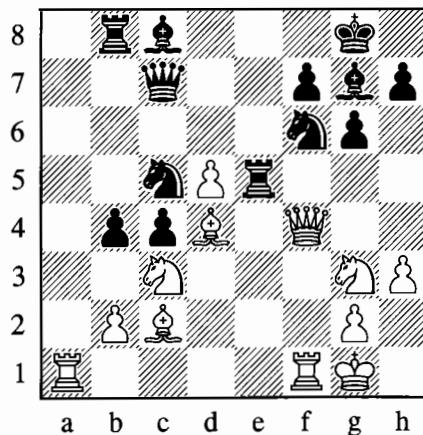
**26...♗xd6 27.♗d5† ♖f8 28.♗e4 ♕d7
 29.♗h1 ♖xb2 30.♖xc4**



30...♗e8 31.♗h4 ♖g7†

Black keeps some winning chances.

C2222) 21.♗f4

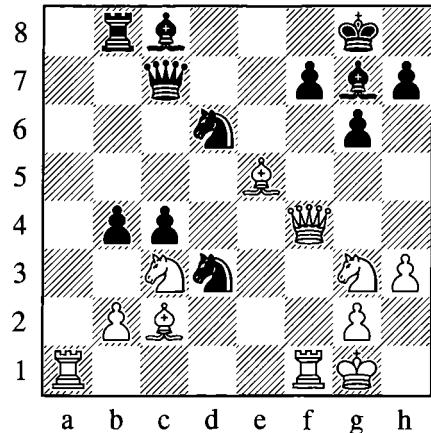


21...♗e8 22.d6!

Without this tactical finesse White would be in trouble.

22...♗xd6 23.♗xe5 ♕d3!N

Black needs to improve on 23...♗e6? as played in Zsinka – Danner, Budapest 1985, after which 24.♗xd6!N ♖b6† 25.♗f2 ♕d4 26.♗ce4 would have given White a clear advantage.



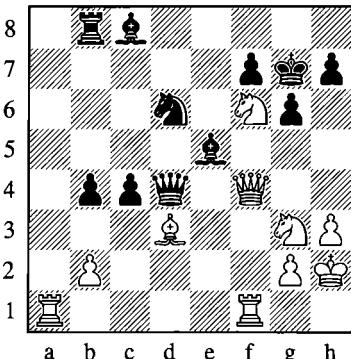
24.♕xd3 ♕c5† 25.♔h2

The machine is optimistic about Black's chances from here, despite the fact that he is temporarily a rook down.

25...♕xe5!?

This is not the only move, but it is the most interesting and problematic for White.

25...♕xe5 is also possible: 26.♕ce4 ♕d4 (26...♕xf4 27.♕xc5 ♕e5 28.♕ac1 h5 29.h4 cx d3 30.♕xd3±) 27.♕f6† ♕g7

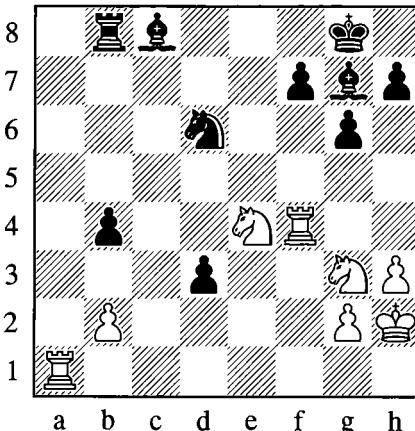


28.♕e8† (28.♕xd4 ♕xd4 29.♕fe4 ♕xe4 30.♕xe4 ♕xb2 31.♕a2 ♕e5 32.♕d5 ♕e6 33.♕xe6 fxe6) 28...♕xe8 29.♕xf7† ♕h6 30.♕xc4 ♕b7 31.♕f2 ♕xf2 32.♕xf2 ♕d6 33.♕d3 ♕e4 34.♕d2 ♕f4=

26.♕ce4!

This is virtually the only move.

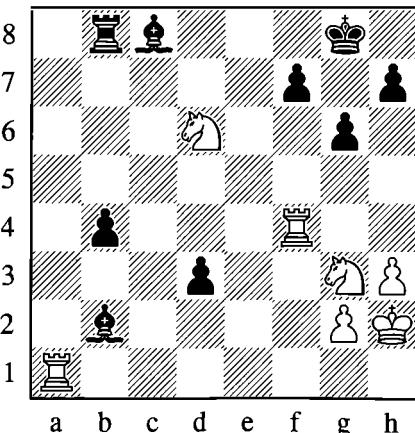
27...♕xb2 is good enough for equality:
28.♕xd6 (28.♕e1 ♕xe4 29.♕xe4 ♕c3 30.♕e2 ♕e5 31.♕f3 ♕e6 32.♕b1 ♕b5+) 28...♕xa1 29.♕xc4 ♕e6 30.♕xe6 fxe6 31.♕c4 b3 32.♕f1 ♕d4 33.♕b1 b2 34.♕e4 ♕a8=



28.♕xd6 ♕xb2!?

28...♕e5 29.♕f3 ♕xd6 30.♕xd3 ♕e5 31.♕d8† ♕g7 32.♕e1 (32.♕c1? ♕e6 33.♕xb8 ♕xb8+) 32...♕e6 33.♕xb8 ♕xb8 34.♕e3=

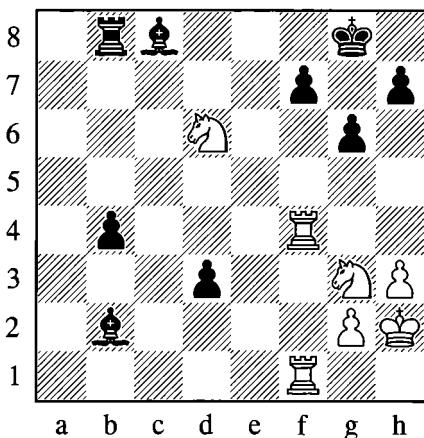
Despite being a rook down, Black has a full share of the chances. In the following analysis we can admire the amazing power of the bishops.



29.♕af1

29.♗a5 d2
 29...b3 30.♕xc8 ♕c1 31.♗e7† ♕f8 32.♗f1
 b2 33.♗c6 b1=♕ 34.♗xb8 ♘xb8 35.♗xc1
 ♘d6 36.♗d1 h5 37.h4 d2=

30.♗f1
 30.♗d5? ♕e6 31.♗xd2 ♕c1 32.♗df2 b3†
 30...♕e6 31.♗ge4 ♕c1 32.♗a7 ♕b2 33.♗d1
 ♕e5† 34.♗h1 ♕xd6 35.♗xd6 b3 36.♗e4
 ♕f5 37.♗xd2 ♗d8 38.♗h2 ♕c2 39.♗f1 ♗xd2
 40.♗fxf7 ♕e4=

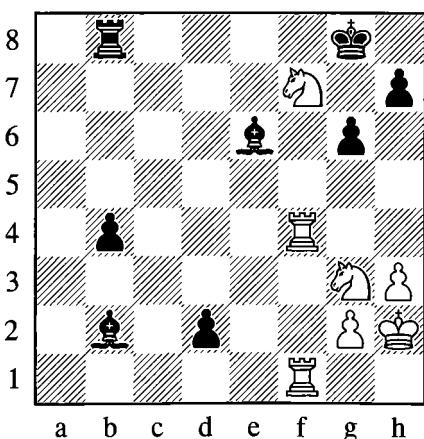


29...♕e6 30.♗xf7!

White must be careful, for instance: 30.♗4f3
 b3 31.♗xd3 ♕e5 32.♗dd1 b2 33.♗fe1 f6+–

30...d2

The queenside pawns are extremely dangerous, but White can narrowly force a draw.



31.♗h6† ♕g7 32.♗g4 b3 33.♗e4 ♕b6
 34.♗e2 g5 35.♗d1 ♕xg4 36.hxg4 ♕f6
 37.♗xd2 b2 38.♗xb2 ♕xb2 39.♗g3=

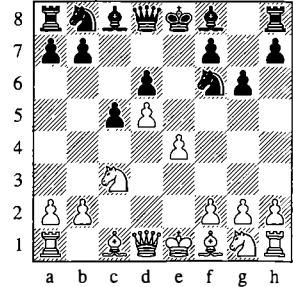
Conclusion

This chapter has featured some of the sharpest variations in the book. We have seen many wild positions, the evaluations of which depend almost exclusively on tactics. In such situations it is impossible to memorize or calculate every possibility, so you will also have to rely on intuition to some degree. Overall Black has a lot of exciting possibilities and in theoretical terms he seems to be at least okay everywhere.

Chapter 14

e4 Systems

Sidelines



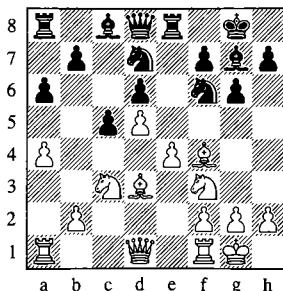
Variation Index

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♗c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4

6...g6

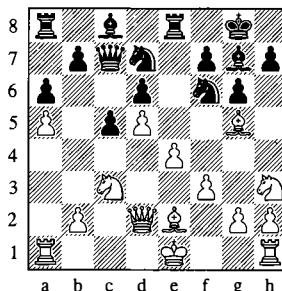
A) 7.♗b5†	185
B) 7.♗e2	187
C) 7.♗f3	189
D) 7.♗d3	191

A) after 12.♗f4



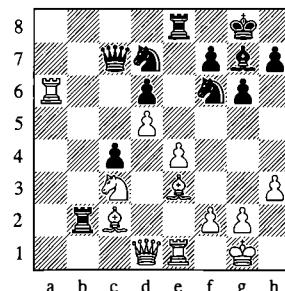
12...♗g4!N

B) after 13.♗h3



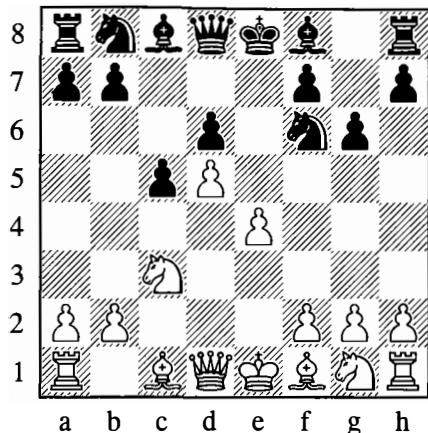
13...c4?N

C) after 20.♗xa6



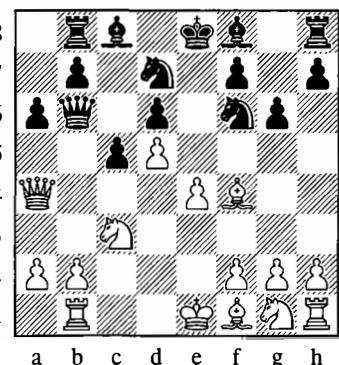
20...♗g4N

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5
6.e4 g6



In this chapter we will round up a few of White's rare possibilities with the pawn already on e4. I will divide them according to four options on the next move: A) 7. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$, B) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$, C) 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ and D) 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$.

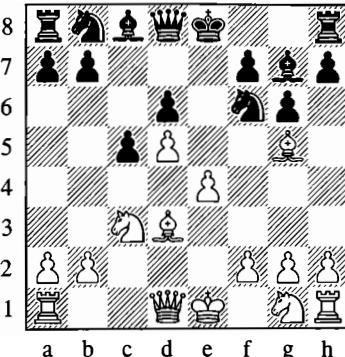
7. $\mathbb{Q}a4\#$ is not dangerous. 7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ (7... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$!, 8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ would justify White's last move.) 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#!$ This attempt to use the queen's position aggressively soon backfires. 8...a6 9.f4 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 10.b1 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 11.Qc3



Now in Vidalina – Bernal Varela, e-mail 2002, Black could have obtained the better chances with 11... $\mathbb{Q}c7N$ with ...b5 to follow.

7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (8.f4 0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ is good

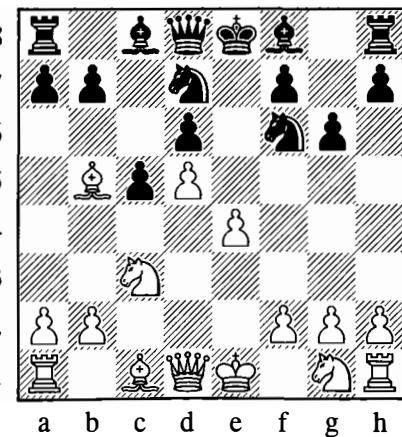
for Black; 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ transposes to line B of the present chapter – see page 187.)



8...0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (9.h3 is likely to lead to the Modern Main Line after a subsequent $\mathbb{Q}f3$; 9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ takes us to Chapter 13 with White having committed the bishop to g5 rather early.) 9...a6 10.a4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ This is similar to variation C on page 189, but again with the bishop committed too early to g5.

A) 7. $\mathbb{Q}b5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 8.a4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0–0 10.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (10...a6 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ transposes to Chapter 8.) 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ leads to variation C. The text move is more ambitious and keeps us in independent territory.



8.a4

8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ a6 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5=$

8...♝g7 9.♗f3

9.♕f4 ♜e7 10.♗d3 ♜e5 11.♗e2 0–0–
Stefanova – Muzychuk, Dresden (ol) 2008.

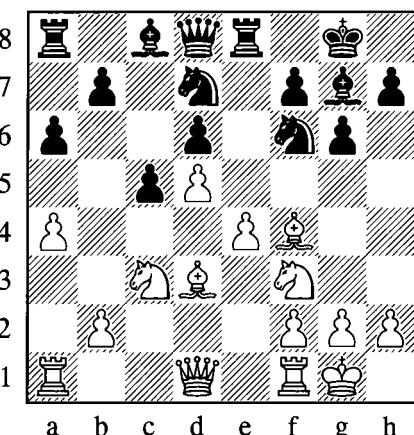
9...0–0 10.0–0 a6 11.♗d3 ♜e8

The immediate 11...♝g4?! also seems okay.

12.♗f4

12.h3 ♜h5! leaves Black a tempo up on line B3 of Chapter 10.

The present position occurred in D. Andersen – Rustemov, Pinsk 1993, and several other games. White has lost a tempo with his light-squared bishop, but if he is allowed to play h2-h3 next, he can argue that he has been able to reach a version of the Modern Main Line where Black has been denied some of the critical options that we examined in Chapters 9 and 10. For this reason I would like to recommend a new idea.

**12...♝g4!N**

Black takes advantage of the absence of the h2-h3 move and aims to take control over e5. Of course we must also consider the small matter of the hanging pawn on d6.

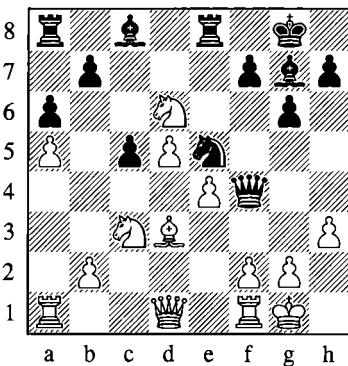
I was not satisfied by 12...c4 13.♗c2 ♜c5 14.♗d2±.

13.♗xd6

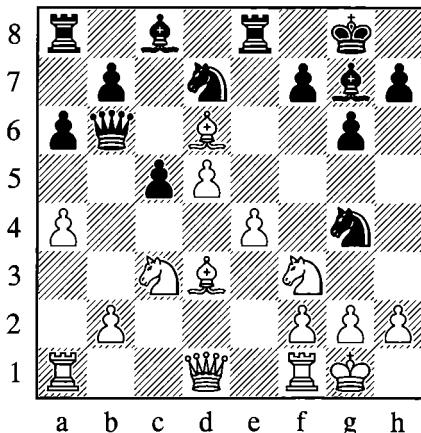
Other moves are not dangerous.

13.♗d2 ♜de5 14.♗e2 f5 15.♗c2 (15.h3 ♜f6 16.exf5 ♜xf5=) 15...g5 16.♗xe5 ♜xe5 17.♗xg4 fxg4 18.♗c4 ♜e7 19.a5 ♜d7=

13.h3 ♜ge5 14.a5 ♜f6 15.♗xe5 ♜xf4 (15...♜xe5 16.♗h2 ♜xd3 17.♗xd3 ♜b8=) 16.♗c4 ♜e5 might lead to an early draw:
17.♗xd6



17...♗xh3! 18.♗xe8 ♜xg2 19.♗xg2 ♜g5†=

13...♛b6**14.♗d2!**

White must show some resourcefulness, as meekly retreating the bishop would allow 14...♝xb2 winning material.

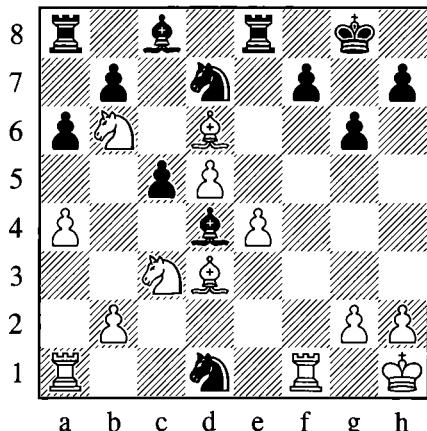
14...Qxf2! 15.Qc4!

In this complex position Black has two promising moves.

15...Qxd1

15...Wxd6 16.Qxd6 (16.Qxf2 Wf8 17.Qh1 Qe5#) 16...Qxd1 17.Qaxd1 (17.Qxe8?? Qd4# 18.Qh1 Qxb2+) 17...Qd4# 18.Qh1 Wf8= is a simple way to reach an equal endgame.

16.Qxb6 Qd4# 17.Qh1



17...Qxb2?!

This is playable, although there is no real need for such risky moves.

17...Qxb6 18.Qaxd1 Qd7 19.a5 Qe5= is a nonsense alternative.

18.Qxa8 Qxd3 19.Qc7 Qe5!?

Now there are many possibilities, and it is not clear who should be playing for win.

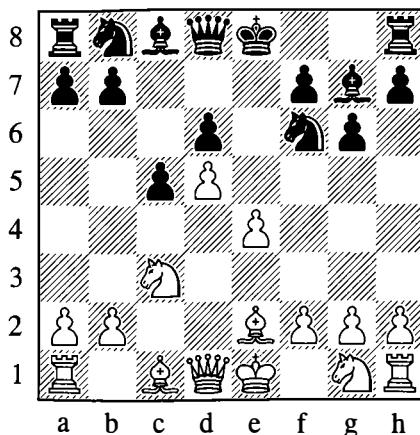
20.Qad1 Qb2?!

20...c4 21.Qxe5 Q7xe5 22.Qe2 Qf2# 23.Qg1 Qh3# could lead to a quick draw.

21.Qxd4 cxd4 22.Qxe5 Qxe5 23.Qb1 d3=

Any result is possible although, for what it's worth, at this stage the computer favours Black just slightly.

B) 7.Qe2 Qg7



8.Qg5

8.Qf3 takes us back to the Classical System of course. The variation with bishops on e2 and g5 is not so common against the Benoni, but often occurs via the Averbakh Variation of the King's Indian.

8...0-0 9.Wd2

The King's Indian move order is 1.d4 Qf6 2.c4 g6 3.Qc3 Qg7 4.e4 d6 5.Qe2 0-0 6.Qg5 c5 7.d5 e6 8.Wd2 exd5 9.cxd5 – although it should be mentioned that 9.exd5 is a much more popular option in that position.

9...Qe8 10.f3 a6 11.a4

This position could be viewed as a version of the Kapengut System in which White has played Qe2 instead of Qge2. One advantage of doing this is that if the b8-knight moves to d7, White will move his own knight to h3 and f2, which is more efficient than the Kapengut route of e2-g3-h1-f2. For this reason it makes sense for us to delay ...Qbd7 for at least one more move.

11...Wc7

11...Wa5 is more common, but I noticed that in some games the queen ends up going via b4, b6 and finally back to c7, so I decided I

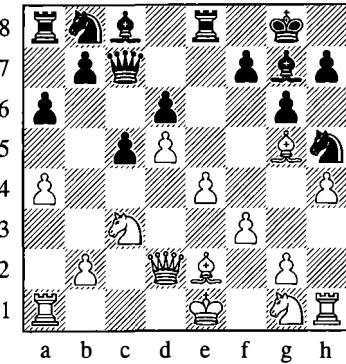
would prefer to put it there immediately. Now the ...c4 advance becomes an important source of counterplay.

12.a5

I only found six games with Black's last moves, and White has tried several different replies. Here are a few examples.

12.♗c1 was played in Rej – Eriksson, Canberra 2004, and now 12...c4!N 13.a5 ♕xa5 14.♕xc4 would have been about equal.

12.h4?! occurred in Kopylov – Sharafutdinov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007, and here Black missed a good opportunity: 12...♝h5!N



13.g4 ♐g3 14.♗h2 ♐xe2 15.♗gxe2 ♐d7
16.h5 ♐e5†

12.♗d1

This typical move makes room for the knight to come to e2.

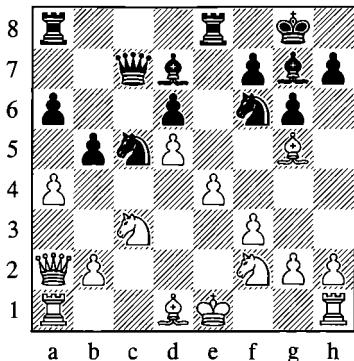
12...♝bd7 13.♞h3

13.♗ge2 ♜b8 14.0–0 b5 15.axb5 axb5
16.♗c2 ♐e5 17.♘f4 ♐fd7† Abbasov –
Wickstrom, Sautron 2008.

13...c4! 14.♗f2 ♐c5 15.♘e2 ♐d7 16.♘xc4?
16.a5N=

16...b5 17.♘a2

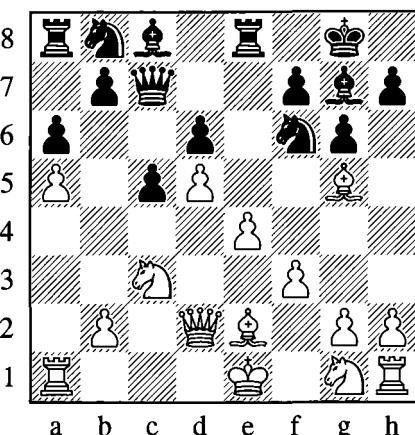
Ilinsky – Djurhuus, Gausdal 1991. Here Black missed a strong tactical blow.



17...♝fxe4!N 18.♗cxe4

18.♗xe4 ♔xc3† 19.bxc3 ♐xe4†

18...f5 19.0–0 ♐xe4 20.♗c1 ♘b6†



12...♝bd7 13.♞h3 c4!N

The slower 13...♝b8 was played in Benjamin – Larsen, Hastings 1987, but why not take the opportunity for immediate counterplay?

14.♗f2 ♐c5

Now White can steer the game in a couple of directions.

15.♔xc4

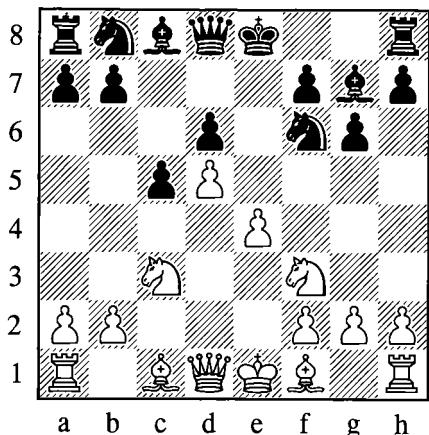
15.♗d1 ♐fd7 16.0–0 b5 17.axb6 ♐xb6=

15...♝fxe4 16.♗cxe4 ♐xe4 17.♗xe4 ♘xc4

From here the game might end in an amusing perpetual.

18.♕c1 ♕xe4†! 19.fxe4 ♕xe4† 20.♗e3 ♕h4†
21.♗f2 ♕e4† 22.♗e3=

C) 7.♗f3 ♕g7



8.♗d3

Now we will see what happens if White tries playing a Modern Main Line without the h2-h3 move.

By the way, 8.♕a4† does not achieve much here due to 8...♗bd7 9.♗f4 0–0!, based on the simple trap 10.♗xd6?? ♗b6 and White loses a piece.

8...♗g4!

There is a reason why h2-h3 is normally played. Black could play 8...0–0 first, intending 9.0–0 ♗g4, but this would needlessly give White a chance to transpose to the more challenging system with 9.h3!.

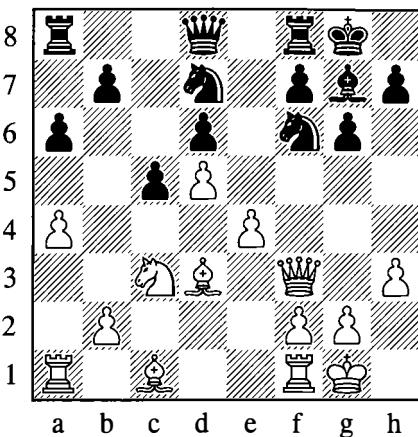
9.0–0

9.♕a4†?! carries no sting whatsoever here: 9...♗bd7 10.♗d2 0–0 11.f3 ♗e5 12.♕c2 ♗d7± Karpov – Timman, Moscow 1993.

9...0–0 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♕xf3 a6 12.a4 ♗bd7

Let's evaluate the opening. White has the bishop pair, but Black can feel happy to have swapped off his troublesome light-squared

bishop. The loss of the f3-knight also means that White has little chance of breaking in the centre with e4-e5.



13.♗f4

13.♕d1 can transpose within a few moves.
13...♗e8 14.♗e1 ♕c7 15.♗e3!? (15.♗f4 transposes to the main line.) 15...c4 16.♗c2 Saidy – Sherwin, New York 1966. 16...♗c5N 17.a5 ♗fd7 (17...♗fxe4? 18.♗xe4 ♗xe4 19.♗b6+–) 18.♗e2 ♗e5 19.♗f1=

13...♕c7

The queen goes to a typical square where she monitors the queenside and supports a future ...c5-c4 push.

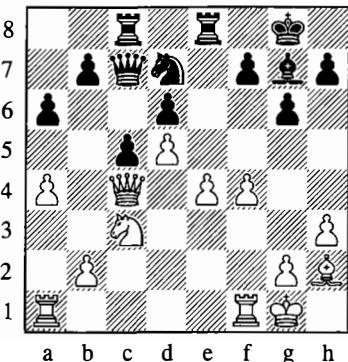
14.♗fe1

A glance at the database reveals that a huge number of alternatives have been tried here. I don't consider White's set-up to be especially important so I will mention just a couple of other possibilities.

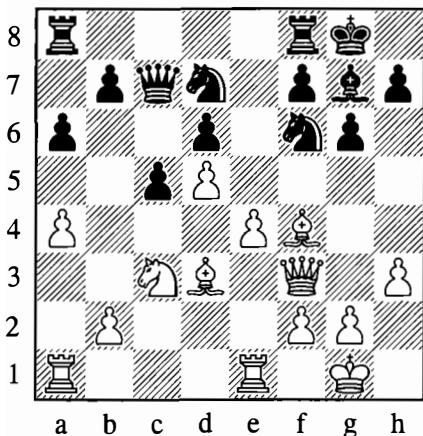
14.♗ac1 should, just like most other non-forcing moves, be met by 14...♗fe8.

14.♗e2 ♗fe8 15.♗h2 sees White preparing for the e4-e5 break. 15...♗ac8 16.♗c4 ♗e5 17.f4 ♗xc4 18.♗xc4 ♗d7! The first knight has gone from d7 but the second immediately takes its

place, while also opening the diagonal for the bishop. Watch how the great master of the Modern Benoni skilfully develops a decisive initiative on the queenside.



19. $\mathbb{Q}fe1!$?! $\mathbb{W}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{E}ab1$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f1$ c4 22. $\mathbb{E}e2$ b5 23. axb5 axb5 24. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 25. bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}d3$ 27. $\mathbb{W}e1$ c3 28. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 0–1
Donner – Tal, Zürich 1959.



14... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d1$

White must retreat his queen in order to avoid unnecessary exchanges. 15. $\mathbb{E}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{E}xe5\#$ was worse than harmless in Santos Folch – Barriga, Asturias 1995.

15... c4 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ was seen in Fleur – Irwin, Leiden 2002. Here I suggest the logical 16... $\mathbb{Q}c5N$ with the possible continuation: 17. e5 (17. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 18. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7=$) 17... $dxe5$ 18. d6 $\mathbb{W}b6$

(18... $\mathbb{W}c6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5=$) 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}ce4!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ The tactics have petered out to dry equality.

16... $\mathbb{E}ab8$

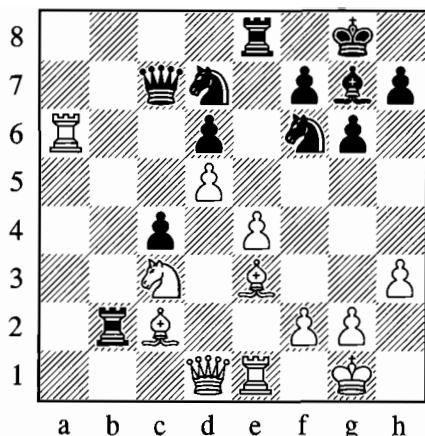
16... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 17. a5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7=$

17. a5 b5 18. axb6 $\mathbb{E}xb6=$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$

White forces a pawn trade, hoping the activity of his rook on the queenside will count for more than Black's passed c-pawn. Overall the chances remain about level.

19... $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xa6$

This position was agreed drawn in Kliewe – Pajeken, Germany 1995, while in another encounter Black went astray – see the next note for details. Instead a logical continuation would have been:



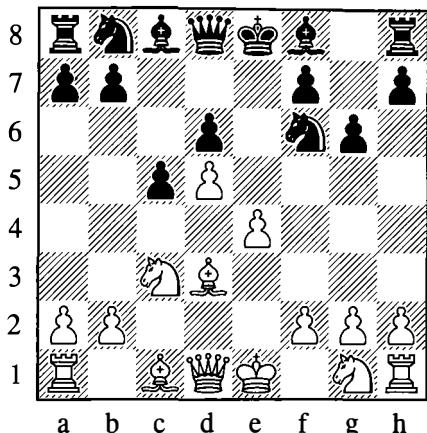
20... $\mathbb{Q}g4N$

20... $\mathbb{Q}b8?$ 21. $\mathbb{E}a7$ $\mathbb{W}c8$ occurred in Conlazo Zavalia – Beckerman, Buenos Aires 1999, and now 22. $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ would have been unpleasant for Black.

21. $hxg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 22. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 23. $\mathbb{E}c6$ $\mathbb{W}e7\rightarrow$

White has two bishops and the structural advantage of a single pawn island, but Black's active pieces and powerful c-pawn give him sufficient counter-chances.

D) 7.  d3



7... $\text{Bg}7$ 8.h3 0-0 9. $\text{Bg}5$

This set-up was recommended by John Watson in his recent "Strategic Repertoire" book.

9... $\text{H}e8$ 10. Kf3

10. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ a6 (10...c4? now is met by 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$)
11.a4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12.0–0 transposes to 12.h3 in the
notes to line A of the previous chapter – see
page 167.

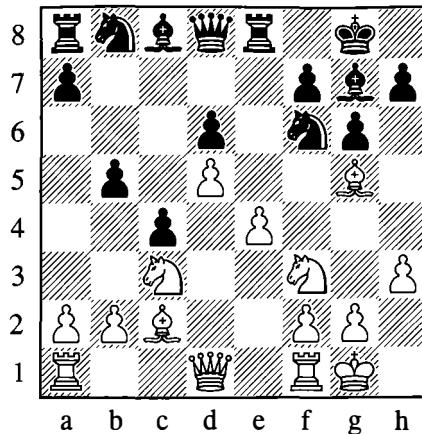
10...c4 11.Qc2

11. ♕xc4? is met by 11... ♔xe4! with the idea 12. ♕xd8? ♔xc3† and Black wins.

11...b5 12.0-0!?

According to Watson this slightly unusual move deserves serious attention.

12.a3 has been more common, but I do not believe it is dangerous. Here is one top-level example to show the way for Black: 12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13.0–0 a6 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 15. $\mathbb{M}fe1$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 16. $\mathbb{M}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c6?$! (18. $\mathbb{Q}h6N$ is better. Now 18... $\mathbb{Q}h8\infty$ is playable, but I prefer the strategic 18... $\mathbb{Q}fd7?$! 19. $\mathbb{M}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ with ideas of ... $\mathbb{W}d8-f6$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ and later invading on d3.) 18... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 19.dxc6 $\mathbb{E}e6!$! Kramnik – Grischuk, Monaco (rapid) 2011.



12...h6!N

This untested move was mentioned by Watson, who must have correctly identified it as the critical continuation.

13. ♕xf6 ♕xf6 14. ♘d2 a6!

This is my improvement. Watson mentions 14... ♕a6 15.e5!, giving White some initiative.

15. ~~wxh6~~

If Black is given time to play ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ then he will simply be better. Note also that 15.e5 dx e 5 16.d6 can be met by 16... $\mathbb{R}a7$, safeguarding the rook and preparing ... $\mathbb{R}d7$.

15... ♟d7=

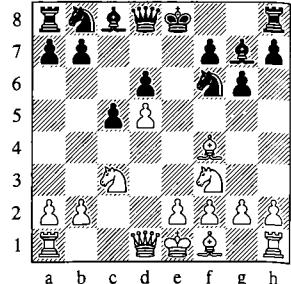
I believe Black is better, as his fantastic control over the dark squares and long-term prospects on the queenside give him more than enough for a pawn.

Conclusion

The lines examined in this chapter may not be the most theoretically critical, but they each require Black to think carefully about the position and select an appropriate plan against his opponent's chosen set-up. This is hardly a surprise, and merely confirms the view of the Benoni as a sharp battleground that should not be navigated 'on autopilot'.

Chapter 15

Lines without e4



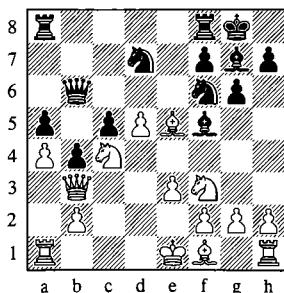
7. $\mathbb{N}f4$ $\mathbb{N}g7$

Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{N}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{N}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6. $\mathbb{N}f3$ g6 7. $\mathbb{N}f4$
 7... $\mathbb{N}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{N}d7$ 9. $\mathbb{W}b3$

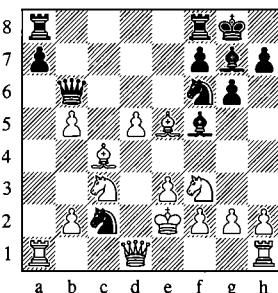
A) 9...b5	193
A1) 10. $\mathbb{N}xb5$	193
A2) 10. $\mathbb{N}xd6!$	194
B) 9... $\mathbb{W}c7!$ 10.e4 0–0 11. $\mathbb{N}d2$ $\mathbb{N}h5$ 12. $\mathbb{N}e3$	199
B1) 12... $\mathbb{N}a6$	200
B2) 12...f5	202

A2) note to 12...c4



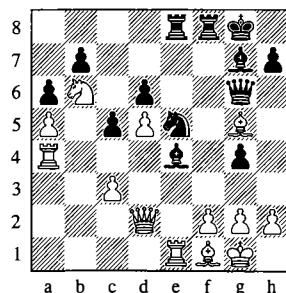
17... $\mathbb{N}xe5?!$ N

A2) after 17. $\mathbb{N}e2$



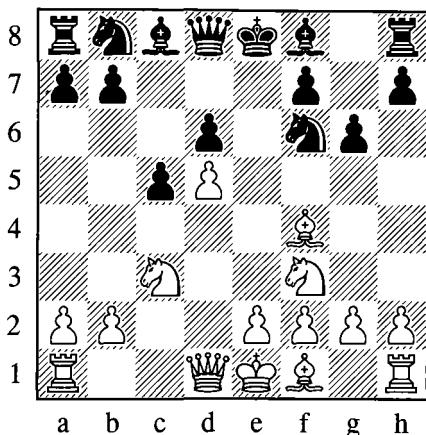
17... $\mathbb{N}xa1$ N

B2) note to 15.h3



28... $\mathbb{N}xg2!?$ N

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5
d6 6.♘f3 g6 7.♕f4



With this move White can try to disrupt our natural scheme of development.

7...♝g7

This could be the choice of adventurous types who wish to venture into the jungle, or at least the variation-heavy chess version of it.

7...a6 leads to calmer play and can be found in the next chapter.

8.♛a4†

This is White's most important idea. Moves like 8.e4 and 8.♘d2 will usually transpose to variations considered elsewhere in the book.

8.h3 0–0 9.e3 a6 10.a4 transposes to the next chapter, while Black also has the option of deviating with 9...♝e8.

8...♞d7 9.♛b3

At this point Black has to make an important choice between A) 9...b5 and B) 9...♝c7!. As you can tell from the choice of punctuation, I believe the second option to be the more promising.

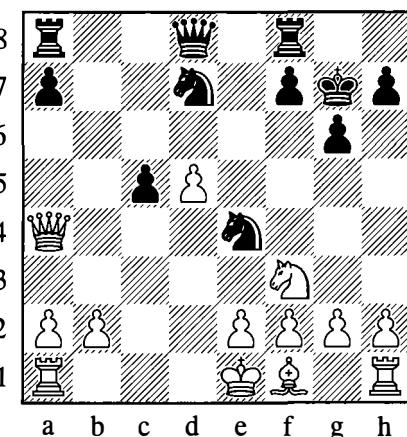
A) 9...b5

Even though this is not my recommendation, it is an interesting line to analyse. It used to be quite popular, but unfortunately the trend in terms of both analysis and practical analysis results has not been going Black's way. White can consider both A1) 10.♘xb5 and A2) 10.♕xd6!.

A1) 10.♘xb5

This line is not the critical theoretical challenge, but it still poses some practical problems for Black, who must play accurately for many moves just to reach an equal position.

10...♝xb5 11.♛xb5† ♜bd7 12.♕xd6 ♘e4
13.♕e5 0–0 14.♕xg7 ♜xg7 15.♛a4

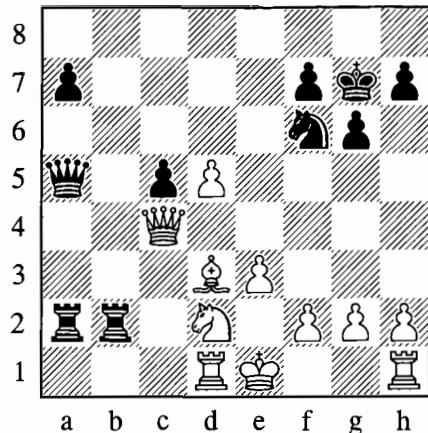


15...♝b8!

An important move which forces the play and does not give White time to complete development.

16.♛xe4 ♜a5† 17.♘d2 ♜xb2 18.♝d1 ♜f6
18...♝fb8? 19.♛f4 ♜8b4 20.e4 ♜d4 21.♝c4
♝xc4 22.0–0 ♜cc2 23.♘f3± Bus – Skrobek,
Poland 1988.

19.♝c4 ♜fb8 20.e3 ♜xa2 21.♝d3 ♜bb2



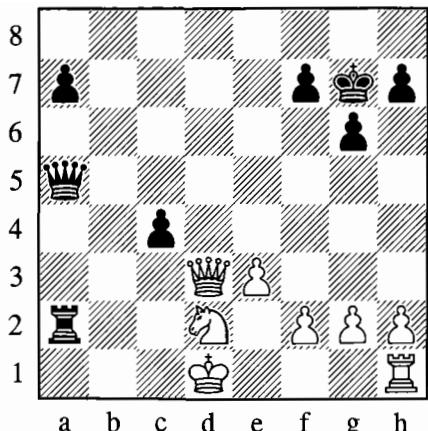
22.♘c1?N

I decided to check what happens if White becomes too greedy and tries to keep his extra piece.

The correct continuation is 22.0–0 ♘xd2 23.d6 ♘b4 with equality, Moermann – Matic, e-mail 1998.

**22...♗xd5 23.♕b1 ♘xb1! 24.♗xb1 ♘c3
25.♗d3 ♘xd1 26.♗xd1 c4**

White is in trouble. Here is an illustrative line:



27.♗d4† ♘g8 28.♗e4 ♘a4†!

**28...♖a1† 29.♗e2 ♘xh1 30.♗f6† ♘f8
31.♗d6† ♘g7 32.♗e8†=**

**29.♗e1 ♘b4† 30.♗d2 ♘a5 31.♗e2 c3
32.♗d1 ♘xd2† 33.♗xd2 cxd2 34.♗xd2
♗xd2† 35.♗xd2 ♘f8†+**

The pawn ending looks to be a lost cause for White.

A2) 10.♗xd6!

This is the critical theoretical path.

10...♘b6

10...c4

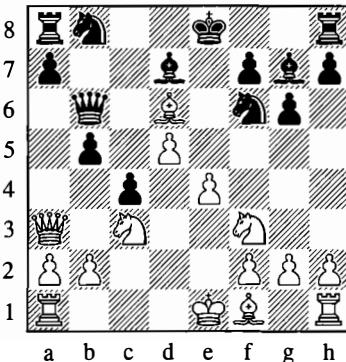
Funnily enough this move, which looks like an obvious candidate, has only occurred in a handful of games. At this point White needs to play precisely:

11.♗a3!

**11.♗d1 ♘f5 12.♗e5 (12.♗a3 ♘e4 13.♗xe4
♗xe4 14.♗d2 a5 15.♗g5 b4) 12...♗bd7
13.♗d4 b4 14.♗a4 ♘a5=** Ki. Georgiev –
Glavina Rossi, Zaragoza 2011.

11...♘b6 12.e4

**12.♗c5 ♘b7 13.♗g5 ♘a6 14.♗ge4 ♘xe4
15.♗xe4 ♘xd5 16.♗d6† ♘f8 17.♗e3 b4
18.♗xa6 c3∞**



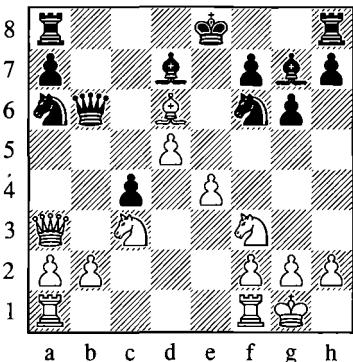
12...♗a6

**12...a5 13.♗c5 ♘xc5 14.♗xc5 b4 15.♗d1
♗xe4 16.♗d4†**

The text move forces White to sacrifice a piece.

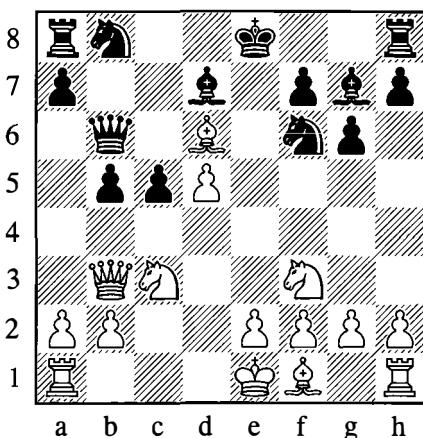
13.♗xc4! bxc4 14.0–0

Unfortunately for Black he now faces a powerful attack, for instance:



14...♝c7 15.♗xc7 ♜xc7 16.e5 ♜h5 17.♗e4
♝f8 18.♗d6† ♜xd6 19.exd6 ♜b7 20.♗ae1†
♜f8 21.♗e7 ♜e8 22.♗c3+–

So it seems that 10...c4 is not really a viable alternative to the main line.



11.♗e5 0–0 12.e3

So White has an extra pawn, and if he is allowed to complete development without making any concessions, then life will obviously get tough for Black. Therefore we must search for immediate counterplay on the queenside.

12...c4

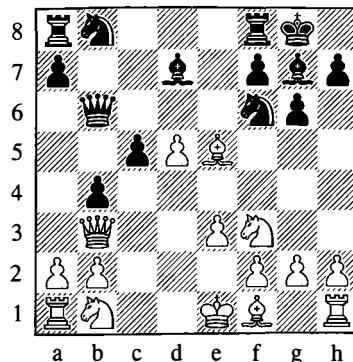
The alternative is:

12...b4

The good news here is that we are pushing the knight back.

13.♗b1

The bad news is that it is now heading for a perfect outpost on c4.

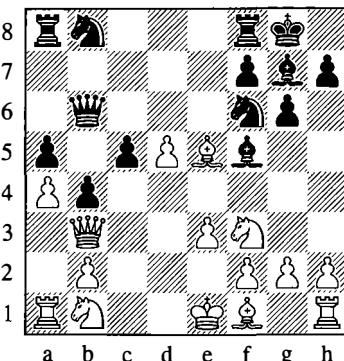


13...a5

13...♜f5 14.♗bd2 ♜bd7 was played in Grigore – Erdogan, Mangalia 1992, and here my recommendation for White would be: 15.♗c4!N ♜d8 16.d6 ♜e6 17.♗g3 ♜b6 18.♗c2±

14.a4 ♜f5

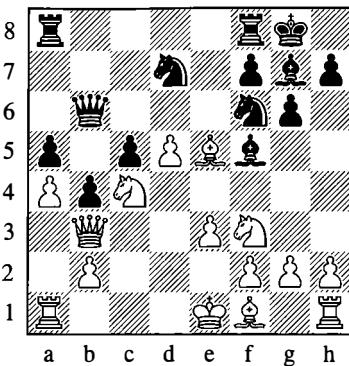
Black tried 14...♝g4 at super-GM level but failed to solve his problems: 15.♗bd2 ♜bd7 16.♗b5 ♜fd8 17.♗g3 ♜xf3 18.gxf3 ♜a7 This was Gelfand – Gashimov, Linares 2010, and now White has several good moves, one example being 19.d6N±.



15.♗bd2 ♜bd7 16.♗c4

As GM Emms has pointed out, the position of the bishop on f5 instead of g4 means that Black can exchange on e5 without losing a

tempo afterwards. For instance, if White tries 16.♗b5N then 16...♝xe5 17.♝xe5 ♗e4 18.♝xe4 ♜xe5 19.♝g3 ♜f6 gives Black reasonable compensation.



16...♝d8 17.♝d1 ♜xe5!?

17...♝e4 18.d6 was unconvincing for Black in Khismatullin – Venetsev, Olginka 2011.
18.♝cxe5 ♜e4 19.♝c4 ♜d6

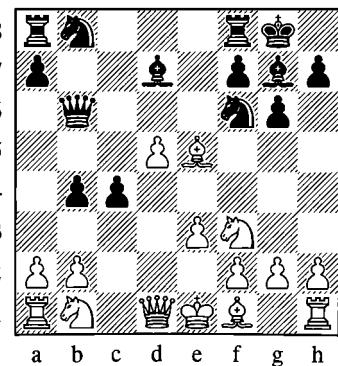
Black has a degree of compensation, but I would take White if given the choice.

13.♝d1 ♜a6

The alternative is:

13...b4 14.♝b1

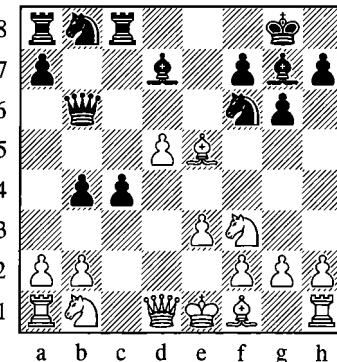
Black also has to be ready for: 14.♝e2 ♜b5 15.♝ed4 (or 15.♝f4 ♜bd7 16.♝d4 ♜b7 17.♝e2 Kaluga – Badmatsyrenov, Barnaul 2011, 17...♝fd8N=) 15...♝bd7 16.♝xb5 ♜xb5 17.♝d4 ♜xd5 18.♝e2 ♜b6 19.0–0 ♜ac8 20.♝c1 Aronian – Gashimov, Wijk aan Zee 2012. After 20...♝e6!N Black is close to equal.



14...♜c8

I think this is Black's best chance.

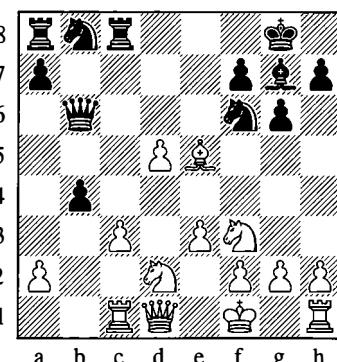
The more popular 14...♝b5 does not equalize: 15.a4 ♜a6 16.♝bd2 c3 17.bxc3 ♜xd5 18.♝xg7 ♜xg7 19.cxb4 ♜xb4!N (Even worse is: 19...♜e8 20.b5 ♜c3 21.♝c4 ♜xd1 22.♝xb6 axb6 23.♝xd1 ♜b7± Llanes Hurtado – Del Rio Angelis, Ayamonte 2007.) 20.♝b3 ♜xf1 21.♝xf1 ♜d7 22.g3 ♜c5 23.♝c3† f6 24.♝g2 Black does not have much to show for the sacrificed pawn.



15.♝bd2

White could also consider: 15.♝e2 ♜f5 (15...♝c5N 16.0–0 ♜xd5 17.♝xd5 ♜xd5 18.♝c1 c3 19.bxc3±) 16.0–0 ♜bd7 17.♝d4± Szymczak – Morchat, Polanica Zdroj 1995.

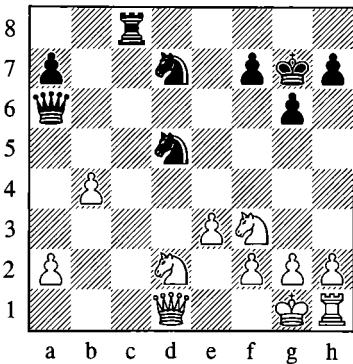
15...♝b5 16.♝c1 c3 17.bxc3 ♜xf1 18.♝xf1



18...♝xd5!?

I also checked 18...bxc3 19.♝xc3 Yrjola – Winants, Dubai 1986, and now the best line seems to be: 19...♝a6†N 20.♝g1 ♜bd7

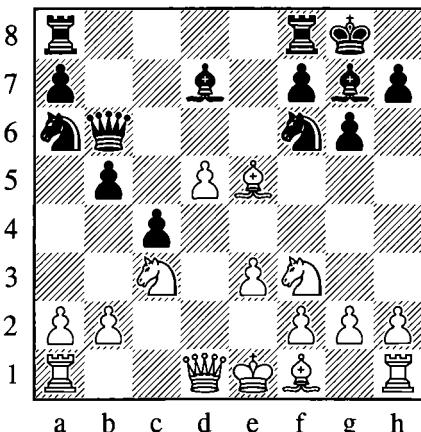
- 21.g3 ♔xd5 22.♔xg7 ♔xg7 23.♔g2 ♕xa2
 24.♔a1 ♕c2± Here too Black must fight for a draw.
 19.cxb4 ♕a6† 20.♔g1 ♔d7 21.♔xg7 ♔xg7
 22.♔xc8 ♕xc8



23.♕a1† ♔7f6 24.g4 h6 25.h4 ♔c3 26.g5 ♔fd5

Black has enough play to keep the game interesting, although he is still falling short of full equality.

A long time ago, the text move was believed to be fully adequate for Black. Unfortunately modern analysis paints a different picture.



14.a4!

Breaking up the queenside pawns forces Black to embark on a wild attack, for which he is not yet fully prepared.

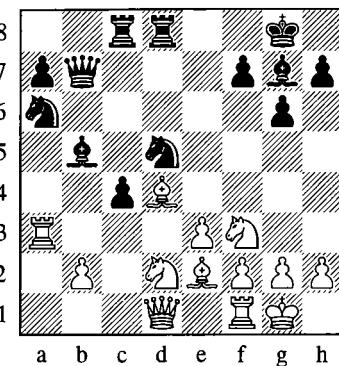
White has a second good option:

14.♔e2

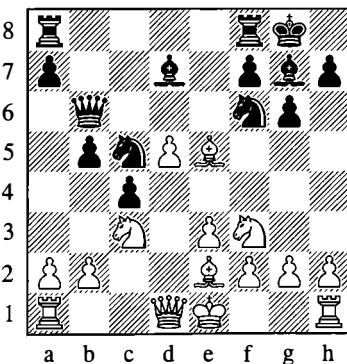
Even after this simple move Black will struggle to find enough counterplay.

14...♔c5

14...b4 15.♔b1 ♕ac8 16.0–0 ♔fd8 17.♔bd2 ♔b5 18.♔d4 ♕b7 (18...♔c5?! may be the best chance, for instance: 19.♔xc4 ♕a6 20.♔c2 ♔xd5 21.♔xg7 ♔xg7 22.♔d4 ♔f4 23.♔xb5 ♕xe2† 24.♔xe2 ♕xb5 25.b3 ♔e4 26.♔b2† ♔c3±) 19.a4! bxa3 20.♔xa3 ♔xd5



Yeah, we took the pawn back! 21.♔xg7 ♔xg7 22.♔a1 ♔g8 But not for long. 23.♔d4† Riazantsev – Cheparinov, Batumi 2002.



15.0–0 ♔fd8

15...b4?N may be a slight improvement.

16.♔b1 ♕a4 Now a possible continuation is: 17.♔d4 ♔d3 18.a3 ♔xe5 19.♔xe5 ♔d7 20.♔xd7 ♕xd4 21.exd4 ♕xd7 22.axb4 ♕fb8 23.♔xc4 ♕xb4 24.b3 ♕xd4 25.♔a2 a5

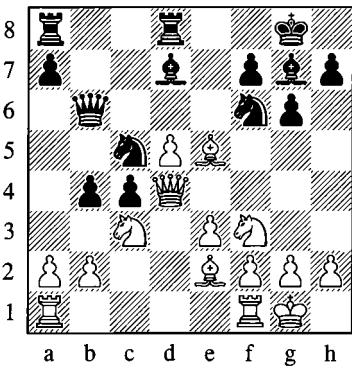
26. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{B}b6$ Black has some compensation, but it only gives him good chances for a draw.

16. $\mathbb{W}d4$

16.a3 $\mathbb{Q}b3\infty$

16...b4

Black has managed to develop some initiative, but as usual he falls a little short of full equality.



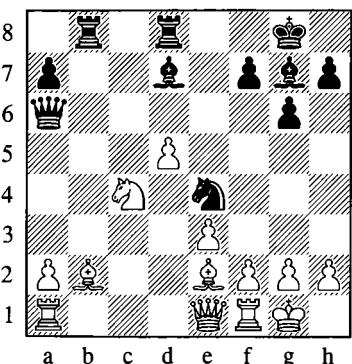
17. $\mathbb{Q}d2!!$

The unassuming 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1N$ is also not bad.

17... $bxc3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}a6$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $cxb2N$

19... $\mathbb{E}ac8?!$ was played in Scott – Marcotulli, e-mail 2002, and here 20. $\mathbb{W}d6!$ would have brought White a clear advantage.

20. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$ 22. $\mathbb{W}e1$

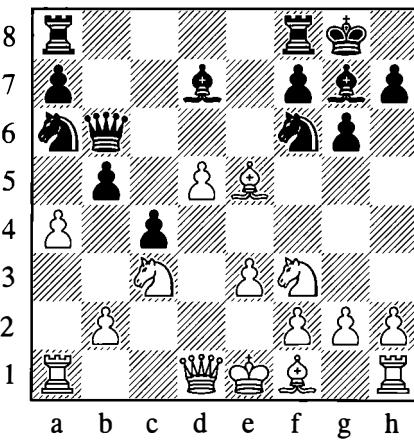


22... $\mathbb{E}xb2$

22... $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{B}b5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 25. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 26. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{E}xb2$ 27. $a4$ $\mathbb{W}b3$ 28. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 29. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 30. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}a2$ 31. $\mathbb{E}e2$ also does not bring much joy for Black.

23. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{B}b5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 25. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 26. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 27. $\mathbb{E}d1\pm$

The general pattern here is clear: Black is struggling to justify his pawn sacrifice and the most he can hope to achieve against an accurate opponent is to fight for a draw. But let us now return to the main line where White is playing more ambitiously.



14... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

This is more or less forced. Instead after 14...b4? 15. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{E}xb5$ 16. $axb5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 18. 0-0 White's advantage had already reached decisive proportions in Volzhin – Kekelidze, Graz 1999.

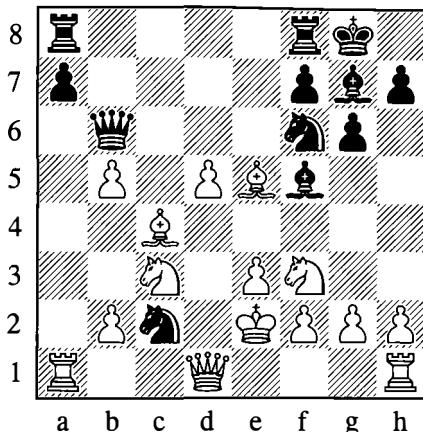
15. $axb5$

White is just too solid and I have not found any way for Black to justify his ambitious play.

15... $\mathbb{E}f5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\ddagger$

Another notable game continued: 16... $\mathbb{E}fc8$ 17. $b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4?$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\ddagger$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xc2?!$ A beautiful sacrifice, although it was not strictly necessary. 19... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 21. 0-0 White's pieces dominate the board. 21... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 22. $\mathbb{E}fc1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 23. $e4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 25. $d6$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 26. $e5$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 28. $\mathbb{E}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 1-0 Gelfand – Jobava, Rogaska Slatina 2011.

17. $\mathbb{W}e2$

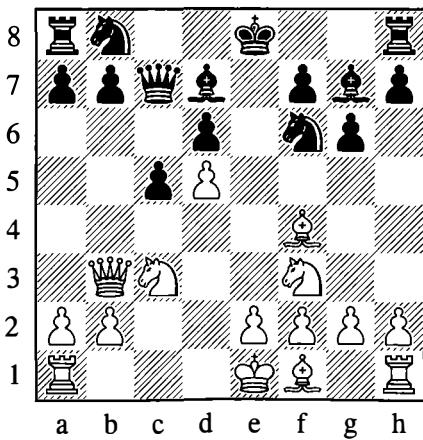
**17...♝xa1N**

Black can easily improve on this game:
17...♝g4 18.♕xg7 ♝gxe3 19.fxe3 ♜xe3†
20.♔f1+– Wiacek – Daciuk, Poland 1992.

18.♛xa1 ♜fe8 19.♕d4 ♜b7 20.b3±

This brings us to the end of a rather sad story from Black's perspective. Maybe we could pick out some line that gives reasonable counterplay and/or sets some traps for the opponent, but my overall feeling is that 9...b5 is not to be recommended. Nevertheless I wanted to give a full picture to enable the reader to see where the problems lie.

With that job done, let's move on to the more promising alternative.

B) 9...♝c7!

This has been the most popular choice. It is theoretically sounder than 9...b5, and has the added benefit of not requiring such heavy memorization of forced lines.

10.e4

10.♕xd6? is a well-known blunder, and after 10...♝xd6 11.♗xb7 ♜b6 12.♕xa8 ♜xb2 White's position is hopeless.

10.e3 allows Black to hunt down the dark-squared bishop, and after 10...♝h5 11.♕g5 h6 12.♕h4 g5 13.♕g3 ♜xg3 14.hxg3 0–0–∞ Black has no cause for concern.

10...0–0 11.♗d2

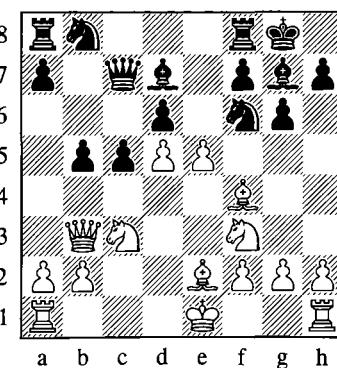
Other moves are less dangerous:

11.♕d3 ♜e8 12.♗d2 (12.0–0 c4) 12...♝h5∞ 13.♕e3 f5!N Miton analyses this position extensively but I am happy to leave it here and say Black has good counterplay.

11.♕e2 b5! 12.e5

12.♕xb5 ♜xe4 13.♗xe4 ♜a5† and Black is doing fine.

12.♗xb5 ♜xb5 13.♕xb5N ♜xe4 14.0–0 ♜d7 15.♕c6 ♜d8 16.♕d3 ♜c8 17.♕a6 f5∞ is mentioned by Miton.

**12...♝h5 13.♕e3**

Thorsteins – Rechlis, Kiljava 1984.

13...c4N 14.♕b4 ♜c8 15.♕c1

15.exd6 $\mathbb{W}b7$ and White's queen is a target.
 15... $\mathfrak{Q}a6$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 17.exd6 $\mathfrak{Q}c5$ 18.0–0
 b4 19. $\mathfrak{Q}d1$ $\mathfrak{Q}d3\infty$

(Analysis by Miton.) Black has pretty good chances in all these lines.

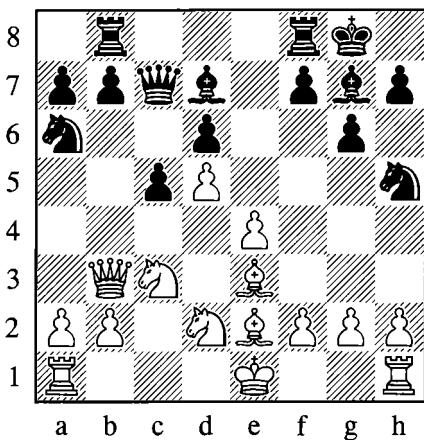
11... $\mathfrak{Q}h5$

Black needs to do something about the threat of $\mathfrak{Q}c4$.

12. $\mathfrak{Q}e3$

Now I have chosen to analyse the interesting sideline **B1) 12... $\mathfrak{Q}a6!$?** in addition to the main line of **B2) 12...f5**.

B1) 12... $\mathfrak{Q}a6$ 13. $\mathfrak{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}ab8$



14.a4

This is the most popular move, although it is important to stress that ...b5 is not strictly a threat at this point.

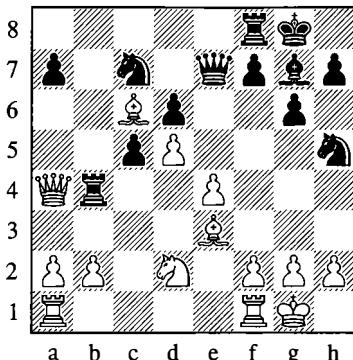
14.0–0 b5?

Black should prefer 14... $\mathbb{E}fe8$ 15.h3 as in Colovic – Aranovitch, Milan 2010, and now 15... $\mathfrak{Q}f6N$ looks best, for example: 16. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ b5 17. $\mathfrak{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 18.a4 $\mathfrak{Q}xe4$ 19. $\mathfrak{Q}xe4=$

15. $\mathfrak{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathfrak{Q}c7$
 18. $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ $\mathfrak{Q}b4$

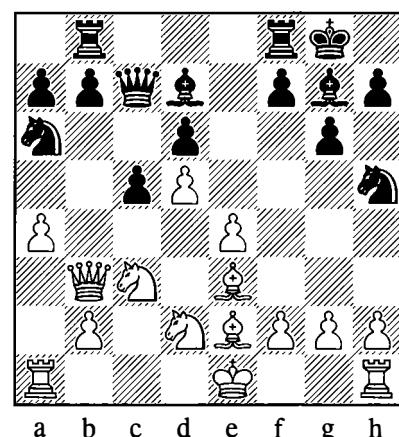
18... $\mathbb{E}xb2?!$ 19. $\mathbb{E}ab1\pm$ Ki. Georgiev – Fier, Benasque 2010.

Moberg – Eklund, Sweden 2008. Now the most accurate continuation looks to be:



19. $\mathbb{W}a5!N$ $\mathfrak{Q}xb2$ 20. $\mathbb{E}ab1$ $\mathfrak{Q}c3$ 21. $\mathbb{E}bc1$ $\mathfrak{Q}xd2$
 22. $\mathbb{E}xd2$ $\mathbb{E}xe4$ 23. $\mathbb{E}ce1$

Black is under pressure.



14... $\mathfrak{Q}b4$ 15.0–0

15. $\mathfrak{Q}c4$ f5 16.0–0 transposes to the note to White's next move. If Black wants a safer alternative he can consider 15... $\mathfrak{Q}f6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathfrak{Q}e8$ 17.0–0 $\mathfrak{Q}h8$ as mentioned by Watson. Black has lost some time with his knight, but is ready to strike back with ...f5.

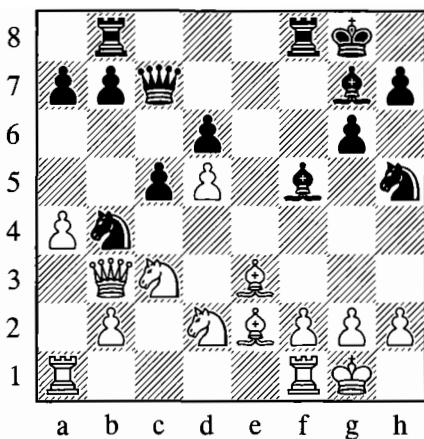
15...f5!?

This risky move may not be as bad as was previously thought. 15... $\mathfrak{Q}f6$ is a safer alternative which may be compared with the previous note.

16.exf5

16.♕c4 f4 17.♕d2 was played in Flear – D. Lund, Birmingham 2006, and here my suggestion would be 17...a6!N, with the possible continuation 18.e5 ♕f5 19.exd6 ♘f7 with interesting play. I'm not sure if I would completely trust Black's position against a computer, but it looks messy enough to be considered unclear over the board.

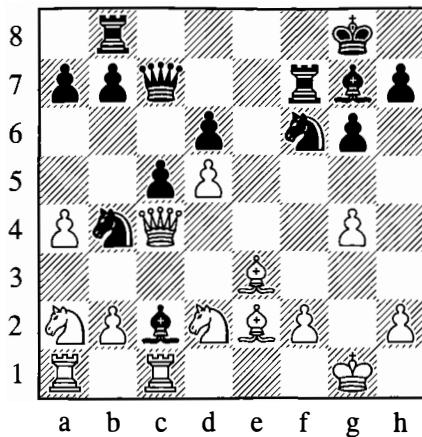
We still have the main line with 12...f5 to consider shortly, so I will not take up too much space with the present variation. I do, however, want to present one sacrificial line which I found especially interesting to analyse.

16...♗xf5**17.g4!?**

This untested move is obviously critical, and leads to great complications.

17.♕b5 ♘d7 18.♖ac1 b6 19.♕c4N (19.♕fd1 a6 was more pleasant for Black in Hardicsay – Fronczek, Prievidza 1978.) 19...♕xd5 20.♕cxd6 ♘e6 21.♕c4 ♘hf6 looks roughly equal.

17...♗c2 18.♘c4 ♘f6 19.♕a2 ♘f7 20.♕fc1

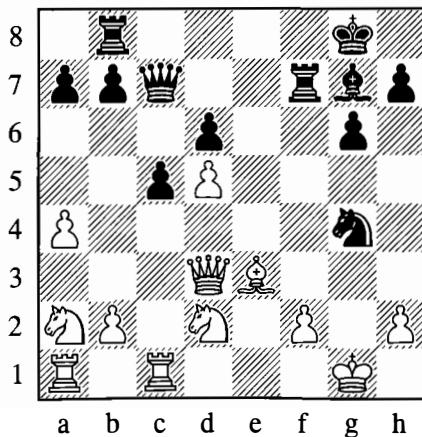
**20...♕d3!**

This is not the only playable move, but it is sound and deserves the exclamation mark for its shock value alone.

20...b5! is the 'calm' alternative which might lead to an early draw: 21.axb5 ♘a4 22.♕c3 (22.♕xb4? ♘xb5+) 22...♗c2 23.♕a2 ♘a4=

21.♕xd3 ♘xd3 22.♘xd3 ♘xg4

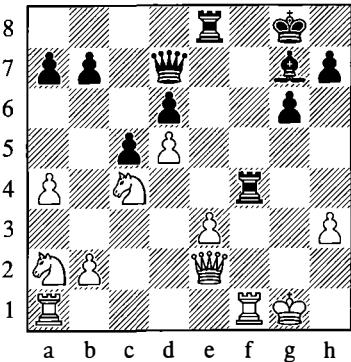
Black's attack is more potent than its initial appearance may suggest. Of course there are many possible deviations, but I will give you some illustrative lines to show the correctness of the sacrifice.

**23.♘c4**

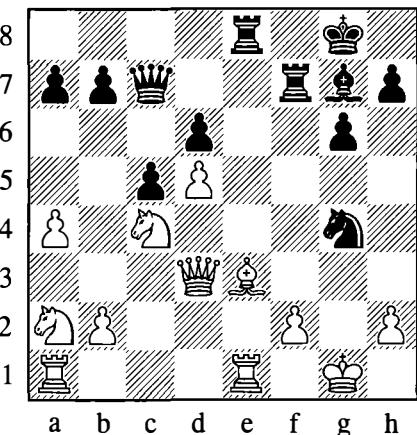
Or 23. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}de4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ with a dangerous attack.

23... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 24. $\mathbb{E}el$

24. $\mathbb{W}e2$? To the untrained eye White may look solid, but in fact he is already almost lost! 24... $\mathbb{W}d7\#$ 25. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{E}f4$! The importance of this move will soon become clear. 26. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 27. $fxe3$



27... $\mathbb{E}xc4$! 28. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xh3$ 29. $\mathbb{E}ae1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6\#$ +

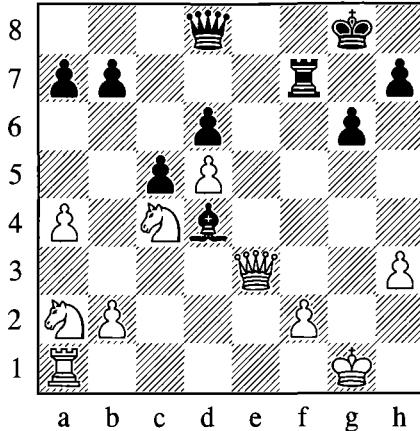


24... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 25. $h3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 26. $\mathbb{E}xe3$ $\mathbb{E}e3$

26... $\mathbb{E}ef8$ may also lead to equality: 27. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 28. $\mathbb{E}f1$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 29. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{E}f4$ 30. $\mathbb{W}e6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 31. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ 32. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 33. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{E}f3$ 34. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{E}xh3\#$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}h6$ 36. $\mathbb{W}e5\#$ =

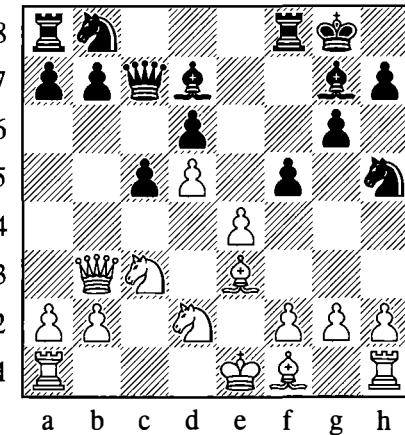
27. $\mathbb{W}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$

White looks to be in trouble, but he can force a draw with the help of a simple counterattack.



28. $\mathbb{W}e6$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xf2\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{W}f3\#$ =

B2) 12... $f5$



The main move.

13. $exf5$ $\mathbb{Q}xf5\#$?

This looks like the better recapture to me, leaving the f-file open for the rook and also the seventh rank for the queen.

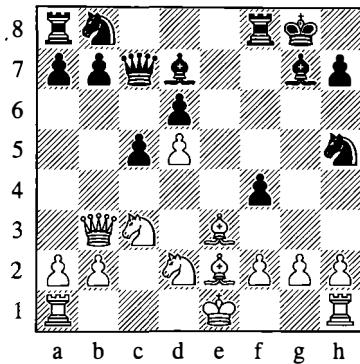
13... $gxf5$

This has been much more popular, but I do not trust it.

14. $\mathbb{E}e2$ $f4$

14... $\mathbb{E}e8$ is more solid, but still less than inspiring. 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $h6$ 16. $0-0$ $a6$ 17. $a4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

18.♗fe1± Almost all the games from here were won by White, and I do not recommend volunteering to be the next victim.

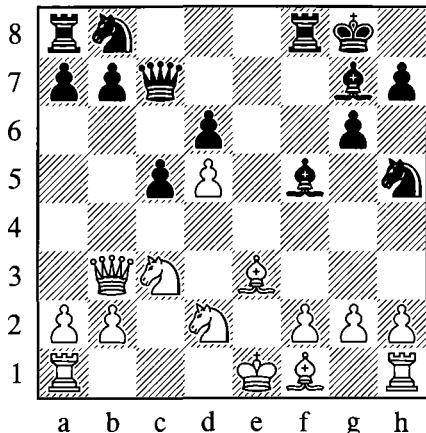


15.♕xc5! f3?

15...♝a6?! 16.♔a3 ♜ae8 17.♝ce4 was also winning for White in Malaniuk – Norwood, Lvov 1986.

15...♝xc5 is perhaps the best chance, but after 16.♕xh5 I am not convinced by Black's compensation.

16.♕xf3 ♜xf3 17.gxf3 ♜xc5 18.♔xb7+– Korchnoi – Nunn, London 1984.



14.♝e2

14.h3 ♜e7? (Miton)

14...♝f6 15.h3

15.♝c4

This move has scored a hundred percent on

the database so is worth checking.

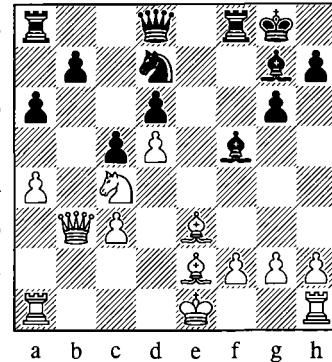
15...♝e4?!

Not the only option, but it seems a logical way to 'exploit' White's last move.

16.♝b5

16.0–0N may be a slight improvement, although after 16...♝xc3 17.bxc3 ♜d7 I think Black's position is okay.

16...♝d8 17.a4 a6 18.♝c3 ♜xc3 19.bxc3 ♜d7



We will follow a game which illustrated quite nicely how Black may build up a kingside initiative.

20.0–0

20.♝xd6? ♜f6 is bad for White.

20...♝e5 21.♝b6 ♜b8 22.a5 ♜f6 23.♝b2 g5 24.♗fe1 g4 25.♝d2 ♜e4 26.♝a4 ♜g6 27.♝g5 ♜be8 28.♝f1

Erbe – Berger, Internet 2004. At this point the game score ends mysteriously with 1–0, just as Black was poised to seize the advantage.

28...♝xg2!N 29.♝xg2 ♜f3† 30.♝xf3 gxf3

31.♝e6

31.♝g4 h6 also gives White some problems.

31...♝xe6 32.dxe6 ♜e8

Followed by ...h6, with better chances for Black.

15...♝a6 16.a3

This has been the usual choice. A couple of other examples:

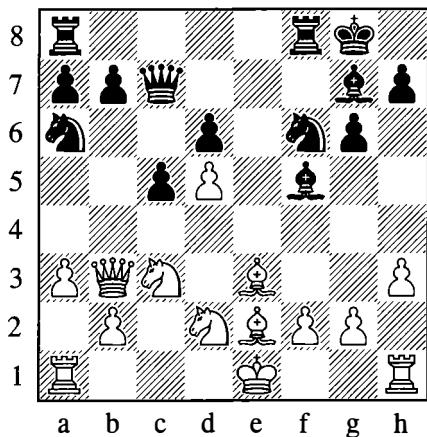
16.0–0 ♜b4= Mons – Kaphle, Oberhof 2011.

16.g4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ 18.a3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f3?$
 19. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{W}b8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8\rightleftarrows$
 19... $\mathbb{W}b8=$ 20.a4 h5 21.g5 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 2.h4? $\mathbb{Q}h3$
 23. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\rightleftharpoons$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Povah – Lund, West Bromwich 2004. Now the most convincing would have been:

25... $\mathbb{Q}f5!N+$

Black has numerous threats and will soon win material.



16... $\mathbb{Q}ab8!$

16... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ was the only move mentioned by Kaufman in his repertoire book, but then after 17.0–0 Black has no good way to counter a later $\mathbb{Q}c4$. In contrast, after 16... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ a later $\mathbb{Q}c4$ will generally be met by ...b5.

16... $\mathbb{W}f7N$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1\pm$ is mentioned by Miton.

17. $\mathbb{Q}b5N$

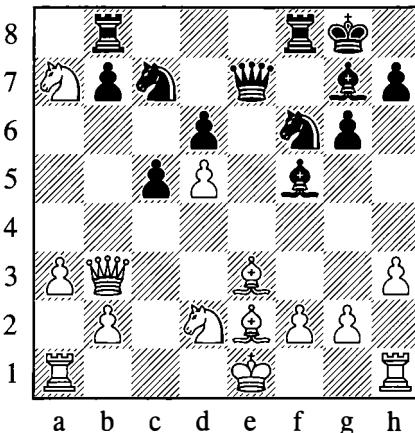
This would appear to be the critical test of Black's last move.

After 17.0–0 $\mathbb{W}d8$ Black is not troubled by 18. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7=$ Del Rey – Forcen Esteban, Utebo 2012, nor by 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ b5 \rightleftarrows .

And as previously suggested, 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ would be answered by 18...b5. For example: 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ a6, when

White's extra pawns just barely compensate for the piece he is about to lose.

17... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$



19. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}d7\rightleftarrows$

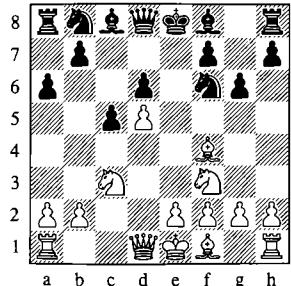
So ultimately it seems Black can get through the opening and obtain a reasonable position by playing 12...f5 and recapturing with the bishop.

Conclusion

The 7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ line is quite demanding and will not be to everyone's taste. It would have been nice to recommend the sharp 9...b5 line, but I don't really believe in it, especially in the critical 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd6!$ as analysed in variation A2. Instead variation B with 9... $\mathbb{W}c7$ is more reliable, although even here the play can be quite double-edged. My advice is to compare these positions with the ones in the next chapter and make your own choice.

Chapter 16

Lines without e4



7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ a6

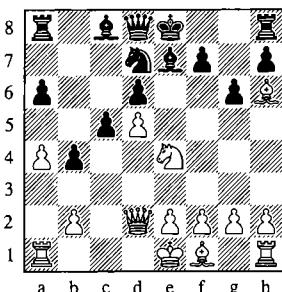
Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

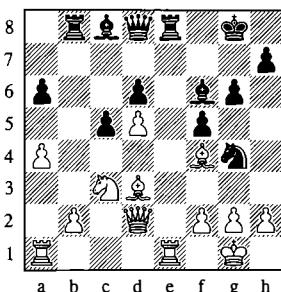
7...a6

A) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$	206
B) 8.e4 b5 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$	208
B1) 10.e5	210
B2) 10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$	211
C) 8.a4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 9.h3 0-0 10.e3	214
C1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$	215
C2) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$	217
C21) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$	217
C22) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2!$	218

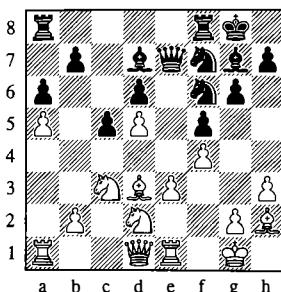
A) note to 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$



B2) note to 14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$



C1) note to 13.a5

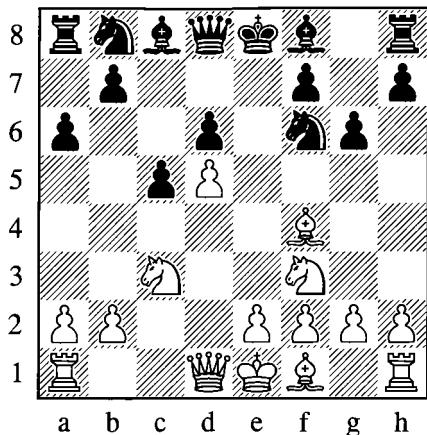


13... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ N

22... $\mathbb{Q}xe1+!$ N

18... $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ N

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5
6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ a6



This is the most popular move nowadays. Black wants to provoke a2-a4 to take away the option of the troublesome queen check. We will analyse A) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$, B) 8.e4 and C) 8.a4.

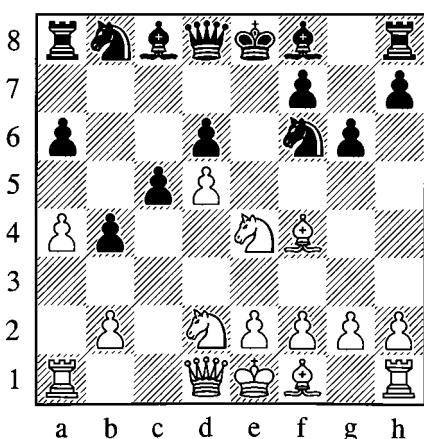
A) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

This rare move has some logic to it, but I don't think it is too dangerous.

8...b5 9.a4

White's idea is to exert pressure against d6, but as we know, playing several moves with one piece in the opening rarely leads to anything good.

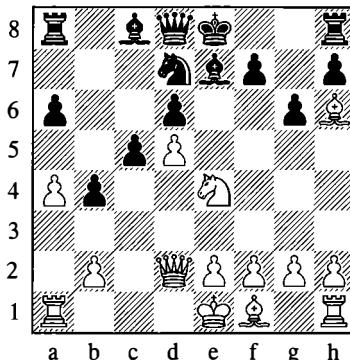
9...b4 10. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$



10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$

Black has a couple of playable alternatives.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is perhaps the safest way to deal with this line. 12. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$! (13.e3N=)

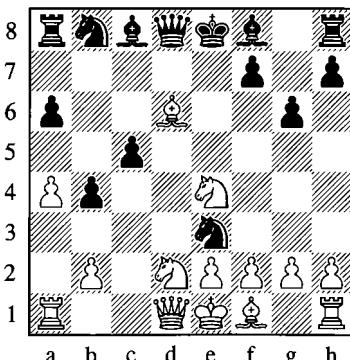


Johansen – Lie, Asker 2000. Now after 13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$!N 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ † $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ Black has exchanged both nasty knights without making any unnecessary pawn moves, and is left with a strong bishop and pawn majority on the queenside. 15.e4 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (16.f3 g5 17.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ †) 16...c4†

I also found an interesting new idea:

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e3$?N

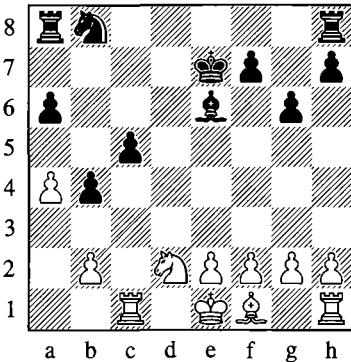
11... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ † $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{W}e5$
14. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ † $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ =
Martinez Martin – Martin Gonzalez,
Ciudad Real 2004.



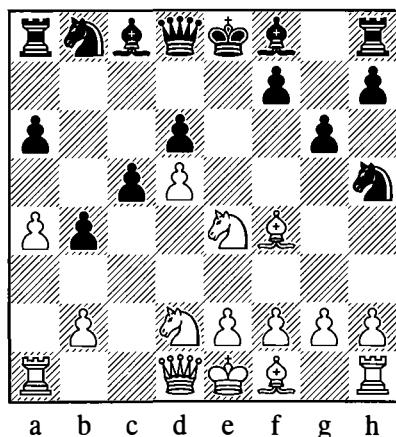
12. $\mathbb{W}b3$

12.fxe3 ♘xd6 13.♕c4 ♔e7 14.♕cd6†
 (14.♗xd8† ♕xd8 15.♕b6 ♕a7 16.0–0–0†
 ♘c7 17.♕d5† ♘c6 18.g3 ♔e6?) 14...♘xd6
 15.♘xd6† ♔e7 16.♘xc8† (16.♗d5? ♗xd6
 17.♗xa8 ♕d8 18.♗e4† ♔e6 19.♗c2 ♗e5
 20.♗c1 c4?) 16...♗xc8 17.♗d5 ♘d7 18.g3
 ♗c7=

12...♘xd6 13.♘xd6† ♗xd6 14.♗xe3† ♗e7
 15.♗xe7† ♕xe7 16.♗c1 ♔e6=



With a little trap:
 17.♗xc5? ♘d7 18.♗c1 ♗ac8?



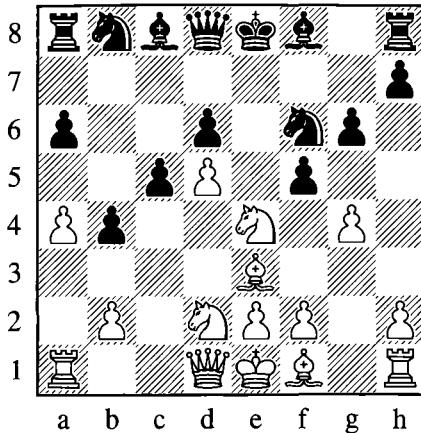
11.♗g5 f6 12.♗e3 f5 13.g4

This is the tactical resource which keeps White in the game.

13...♘f6

Black wants to remove the strong enemy knight.

13...fxg4?! leaves the white knight in the centre, where it is highly influential: 14.h3 g3?
 15.fxg3 ♗g7 16.♗g5 ♘f6 17.♗g2 0–0 Aronian – Gashimov, Nice (blind) 2010. 18.♘c4N+–

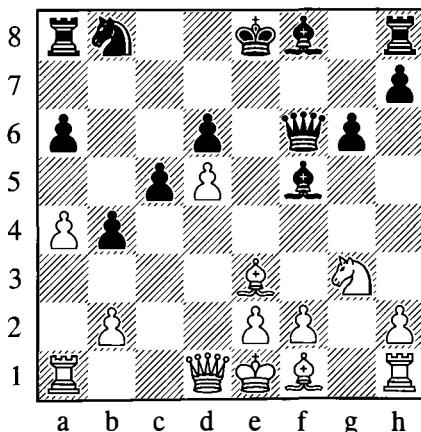


14.gxf5 ♘xe4 15.♘xe4 ♗xf5=

The other knight will be expelled too.

16.♘g3 ♗f6

Now White does not have any threats and must think about where to put his king – not an easy decision with both flanks having been weakened.

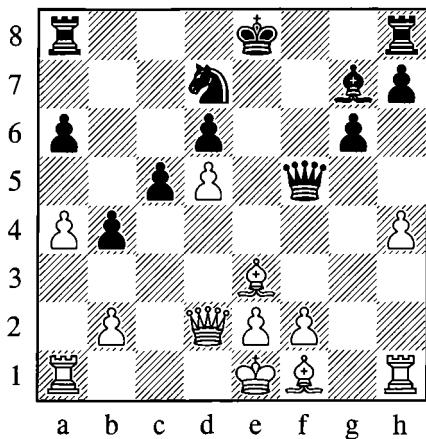


17.♗d2 ♗g7 18.♘xf5

The machine suggests 18.0–0–0N as a slight improvement, but after 18...0–0 I still prefer Black due to his safer king.

18... $\mathbb{W}xf5\#$ 19.h4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Attempting to force the play with 19... $\mathbb{W}e5$ leads to no more than equality: 20.0–0–0 $\mathbb{W}e4$ 21.f3 $\mathbb{W}c4\#$ 22. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{W}a2$ 23. $\mathbb{W}b1$ and now Black can either take a perpetual or play on with 23... $\mathbb{W}xa4$, although in the latter case 24.h5 gives White enough counterplay.

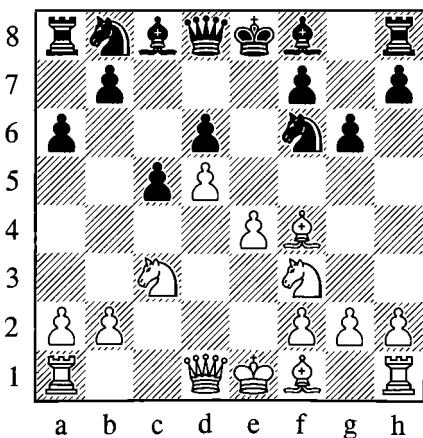


20. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}e4$ 21.f3 $\mathbb{W}xh4\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 23. $\mathbb{B}c1?$

23. $\mathbb{B}b1$ was essential. In that case White's bishops would have provided some compensation for the missing pawn, although I still prefer Black's chances.

23... $\mathbb{W}xb2+$

Salvador – Drei, Cesenatico 2010.

B) 8.e4

This time White aims for direct action in the centre, hoping to expose Black's queenside expansion as a loss of valuable time.

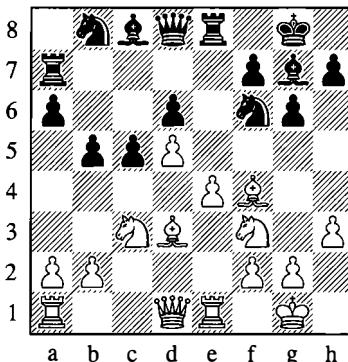
8... $b5$

8... $\mathbb{B}g7$ could transpose to Chapter 8 after 9.a4 0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{B}g4$ 11.0–0, but White can keep the game in the realm of the present system by playing 9. $\mathbb{W}a4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$.

9. $\mathbb{W}e2$

The main line. It is an unusual place for the queen, but the idea is to prevent Black's natural development.

The natural 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ is not too dangerous. 9... $\mathbb{B}g7$ 10.0–0 0–0 11.h3 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{A}a7$. Using the fact that the seventh rank is free, Black improves the position of the rook.



13.a3 $\mathbb{E}ae7$ 14. $\mathbb{E}c1$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 15.b4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}b6=$ has occurred in a few games.) 17... $\mathbb{E}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 20.bxc5 $\mathbb{E}xc5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd6?$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 22.e5 $\mathbb{W}d8$ 23.exf6 $\mathbb{E}xe1\#$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6\#$ Onischuk – Bacrot, Biel 2008.

9... $\mathbb{B}e7$

The main move. Don't be afraid, the bishop will go to the long diagonal eventually!

The need to take the long route to g7 is highlighted by the following short line:

9...♗g7? 10.♗xd6 ♘xd6 11.e5 ♘e7 12.d6 ♘e6

13.♗g5+– A few players have fallen for this; make sure you are not one of them!

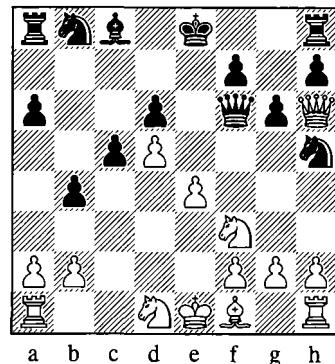
9...♗h5!?

This is not a bad move if you don't mind a draw and there are no Sofia rules.

10.♗g5 ♘e7 11.♗h6 ♘f8 12.♘e3

12.♗g5=

12...♗xh6 13.♗xh6 b4 14.♗d1 ♘f6
 14...♘e7 15.♗d3 ♘g4 16.♗d2 ♘xd1
 17.♗xd1 ♘f6 18.0–0 ♘f4 19.♗xf4 ♗xf4
 20.♗c4± Agdestein – Bjornsson, Reykjavik 1998.



15.♗d2

Yusupov – Dolmatov, Minsk 1987. Here I suggest:

15...♗d7N 16.♗c4 ♗e5 17.♗de3=

And now there are many good moves, for example:

17...a5

17...♗d7 18.f3 ♘b5=

18.♗b1 ♗xc4 19.♗xc4 a4=

White's grip over the c4-square is balanced by Black's extra queenside space and control over the dark squares.

Returning to the main line, White's main options are **B1) 10.e5** and **B2) 10.♘c2.**

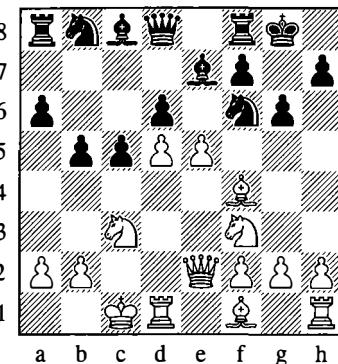
10.♗h6?! ♗g4 11.♗g7? ♘g8±

10.0–0–0!?

I think this is too optimistic for White. He has nothing on the kingside while on the queenside the black pawns are ready to hurl themselves forward.

10...0–0 11.e5

11.h3 b4 12.♗b1 ♘a5 13.b3 A. Ponomarev – Wilke, corr. 2001. 13...♗bd7N 14.♗c2 ♘c7 15.♗bd2 ♗b6 16.♗c4 ♗fd7±

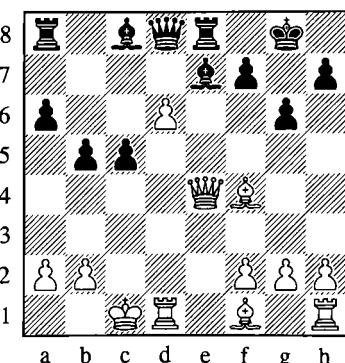


11...♗g4! 12.♗e4 dx5 13.♗xe5

13.♗g3?!N looks like a good attempt to complicate the game, although Black still remains on top with precise play: 13...f5 14.d6 fxe4 15.dxe7 ♘xe7 16.♗xe4 ♘a7 17.h3 ♘f5 18.♗e2 ♗f6 19.♗xe5 ♘f7±

13...♗xe5 14.♗xe5 ♗d7 15.♗f4 ♘e8 16.♗c2 ♗f6 17.d6 ♗xe4 18.♗xe4

Albert – D. Gurevich, Estes Park 1986. Here Black's most convincing path to a huge advantage would have been:



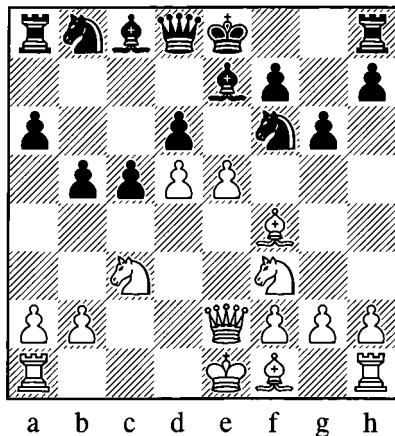
18... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ N 19. $\mathbb{W}f3$

19. $\mathbb{W}xa8?$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2\ddagger!$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}f6\ddagger$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$
 $\mathbb{Q}f5\ddagger$ picks up the queen.

19...c4 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

With ...c3 coming next, Black's attack should decide the game.

B1) 10.e5



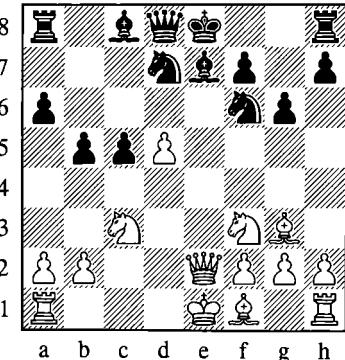
This direct attempt does not promise much.

10...dxe5 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 12.0-0-0

Not working here is 12.d6? $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 13.dxe7 $\mathbb{Q}xf3\ddagger$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xe7\ddagger$ Marsak – Novgorodskij, Nizhnij Novgorod 2008.

12. $\mathbb{Q}g3?$!

Now d5-d6 is inevitable, but...

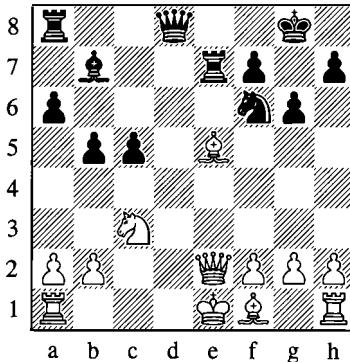


12...0-0!

Black will win back the piece at least.

13.d6 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 14.dxe7 $\mathbb{E}xe7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$
16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ N

Black is doing okay after other moves, but I like this tricky option the most. Now White has to find a few good moves to stay in the game.



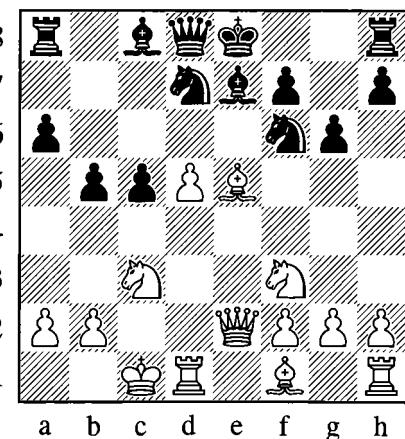
17.f4

17... $\mathbb{Q}d1?$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{E}xe2\ddagger$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{W}e6$
20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}xa2\ddagger$

17... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}f2$

18. $\mathbb{Q}d1?$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xe4$
 $\mathbb{Q}xf4\ddagger$

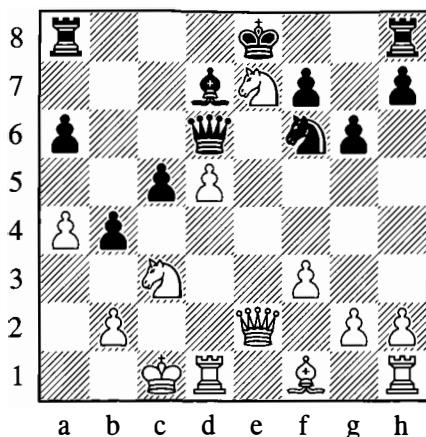
18...f6 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ fxe5 20. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$
gxh5 \ddagger



12... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$

The immediate 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ N 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{W}xe7$ is also fine for Black.

15.f3 ♜d7= 16.a4?! b4 17.♘xe7



17...♝xe7N

The remarkable 17...♝f8?! is playable and led to an eventual victory for Black in Gonzalez Garcia – Pantsulaia, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010, but sometimes the simple moves are objectively the strongest.

18.♝e1

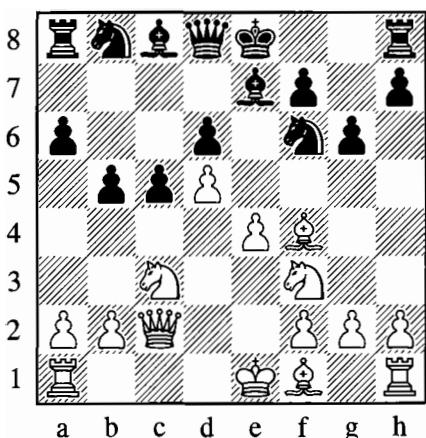
18.♝xe7† ♜xe7 19.d6† ♜d8 20.♗d5 ♜xd5
21.♗xd5 ♜xa4 also favours Black, who intends ...♝d7 next.

18...♝xe2

Now Black wins a pawn.

19.♝xe2† ♜d8 20.♗e4 ♜xe4 21.fxe4 ♜xa4†

B2) 10.♛c2



The queen did her job by luring the enemy bishop to an unnatural square, so now she switches to a more comfortable spot.

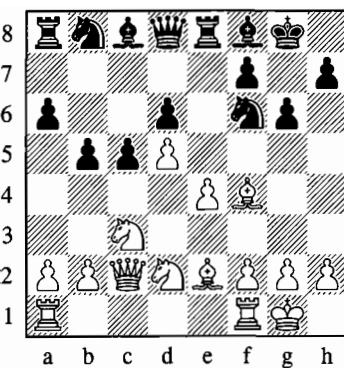
10...0–0 11.a4

White hopes to win the c4-square for his pieces, but in the meantime Black can generate a good deal of activity.

11.♗e2

This move gives Black a lot of freedom.

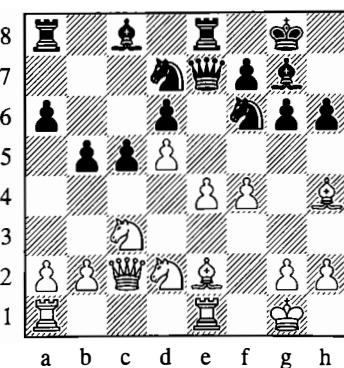
11...♜e8 12.♗d2 ♜f8 13.0–0



13...b4!?

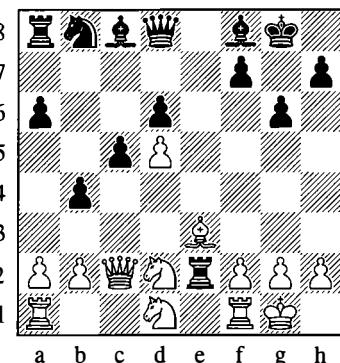
I think Black should take this chance.

13...♝bd7 is the safest line: 14.♝fe1 (14.a4? b4 15.♗d1 ♜xd5 16.exd5 ♜xe2 17.♗e3 ♜f6 18.♗g3 ♜d4→ Wemmers – Degraeve, Belgium 2006.) Flear – Schulte, Oakham 1988. Now an amusing finish might be: 14...♝e7N 15.♗g5 ♜g7 16.f4 h6 17.♗h4



17... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\#$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\#$
 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $exd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Now in S. Schneider – De Firmian, Copenhagen 1999, the best continuation would have been:



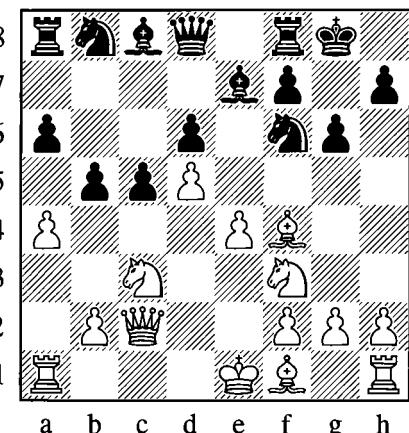
16... $\mathbb{Q}g7!N$

More precise than 16...a5, which still brought Black a decent position in the game.

17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

The pair of bishops and extra pawn give Black more than enough for the exchange.

19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$
 22. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}a5\#$



11... $b4$

White lost so much time in the opening that Black can fight for the advantage.

12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$

12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

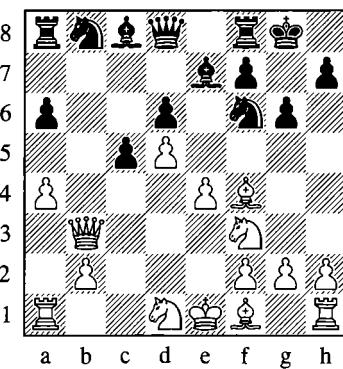
A strange place for the knight, but eventually it can go to c4 via e3.

12... $b3$

I like this move most, although of course it is not the only playable one.

13. $\mathbb{W}xb3$

Perhaps White should consider an alternative, such as: 13. $\mathbb{W}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 15. $\mathbb{B}xb3$ $\mathbb{B}xb3$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 19. $bxcc3=$ Samraoui – Christiansen, e-mail 2003.

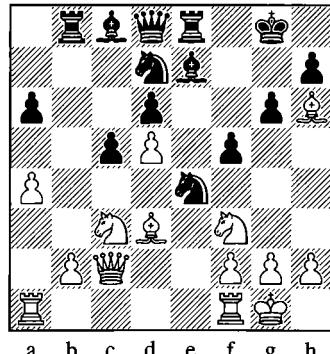


13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ f5 15. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 16.0–0
 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Yusupov – Cheparinov, Amsterdam 2008.

Here I found an improvement:

17... $\mathbb{B}b8!N$ 18. $\mathbb{W}c2$

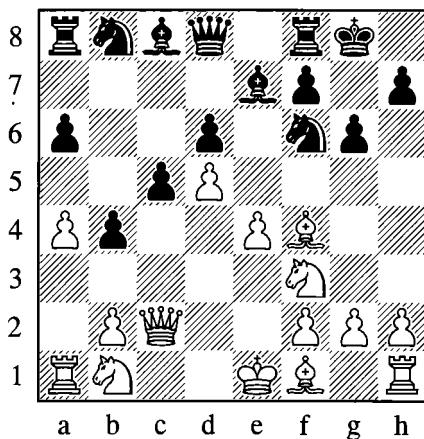


18... $\mathbb{Q}g5!$

It is better to exchange the knight on the kingside.

19.♕xg5 ♕xg5 20.♘xg5 ♜xg5†

Black has the initiative.



12...b3!

This dynamic continuation offers Black good chances.

The solid 12...♘h5 should be enough for equality, for example: 13.♕h6 ♜e8 14.♗d3 ♘d7 15.0–0 ♜f6 16.♘bd2 ♘e5 17.♘xe5 ♜xe5 18.♘c4 ♜f4 19.♕xf4 ♜xf4= Yakovich – Martin Gonzalez, Terrassa 1999.

13.♗xb3 ♜xe4

Black has succeeded in exchanging a flank pawn for a more central one, which is especially useful when you consider that he will soon be able to attack with his rooks along at least one of the newly-opened files.

14.♗d3 ♜f6

This has been the most popular choice, but I am not sure if it is best.

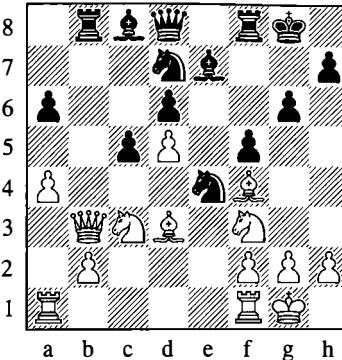
14...f5!?

Black's position is good enough to justify this ambitious move, which aims to keep the knight on its active outpost.

15.0–0 ♘d7 16.♘c3 ♜b8

Black can consider getting aggressive with: 16...g5!N 17.♕c1 g4 (If you don't feel

the urge to give up a pawn, you can play 17...♗b8 18.♗c2 ♘xc3 19.bxc3 g4 20.♘d2 ♘e5 21.♘e2 f4 with a promising position.) 18.♕xe4 fxe4 19.♘d2 e3 20.fxe3 ♜b8 21.♗xf8† ♜xf8 22.♗c2 ♘e5≈



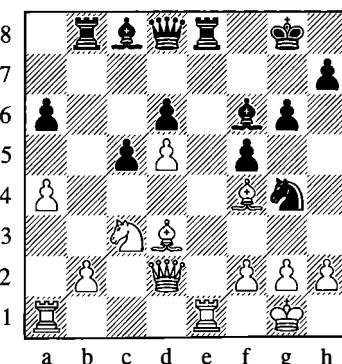
17.♗c2 ♘df6

The opening phase has more or less concluded, and Black is not worse.

18.♕h6 ♜e8 19.♘d2? ♘g4 20.♗f4 ♘xd2

I am not sure if White has enough compensation after: 20...♗exf2N 21.♗xf2 ♘xf2 22.♗xf2 g5 23.♗g3 f4 24.♕xh7† ♔h8 25.♗xf4 gx f4†

21.♗xd2 ♜f6 22.♗fe1



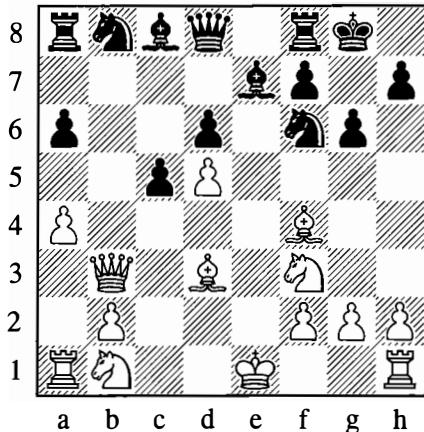
22...♗xe1†!N

22...♘e5 23.♗f1 was less convincing, though still pleasant for Black in Lalic – D. Kononenko, Pardubice 2011.

23.♗xe1 g5 24.h3 ♘xf2 25.♕xg5

25.♗xf2? gx f4 26.♗xf4 ♜xb2+

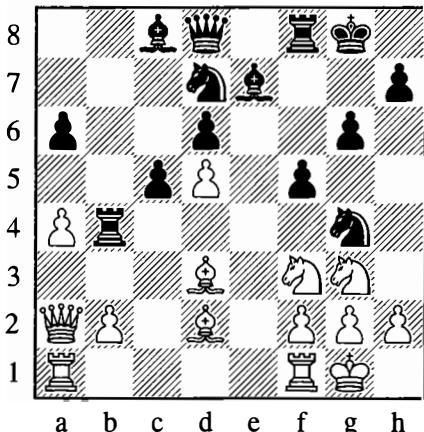
25...♗xh3† 26.gxh3 ♜xg5 27.♗g2 ♔h8†



15.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ **16.** $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ **17.** $\mathbb{W}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$
Black is making full use of the open b-file.

18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ **19.** $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $f5$ **20.** $\mathbb{Q}g3$

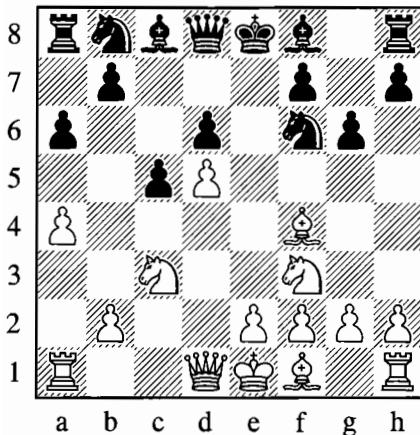
20. $\mathbb{Q}eg5?$ is too ambitious: **20...** $\mathbb{Q}de5$
21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (**21.** $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ **22.** $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ **23.** $\mathbb{Q}c2$
 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ **24.** $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xh2\#$) **21...** $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ **22.** $\mathbb{Q}xg5$
 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ **23.** $b4$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ Now Black is winning a pawn.
24. $bxcc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ **25.** $\mathbb{W}c2$ $dxc5\#$



20... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ **21.** $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ **22.** $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}de5$

Black's position was more comfortable in Vaassen – Daurelle, Internet 2003. Overall I found no major problems, and in some places Black has the luxury of choosing between a couple of promising lines.

C) 8.a4



Preventing ... $b5$ is the main line.

8... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ **9.** $h3$

This is the most important independent line. Instead **9.e4** $\mathbb{Q}g4$ **10.** $\mathbb{Q}e2$ leads to Chapter 8.

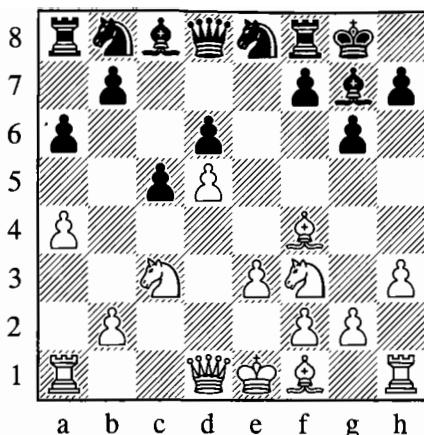
9...0-0 **10.e3**

10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ **11.e3** transposes to variation C22 on page 218.

This line has become quite popular for White, who hopes to slow the game down and limit Black's counterplay by putting his pawn on e3 instead of e4. From here I analysed both **C1)** **10...** $\mathbb{Q}e8$ and **C2)** **10...** $\mathbb{Q}e8$. The first leads to a relatively slow positional struggle, whereas the second is more sharp and active.

10... $\mathbb{W}e7$ has actually been the most popular move, and sometimes transposes to line C1 after a subsequent ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$, but I don't see any special advantage in developing the queen first.

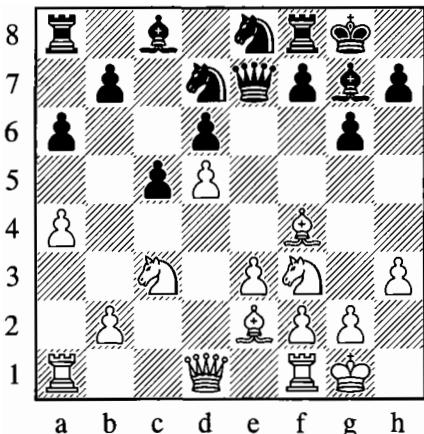
The aggressive **10...** $\mathbb{Q}h5$ **11.** $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $f5$ **12.** $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $f4$ was proposed by Watson, but both Kostas Oreopoulos and Kaufman have pointed out that after **13.0-0±** White is better.

C1) 10...♞e8

Black guards the d6-pawn, thus allowing the knight to come to d7.

11.♗e2 ♞d7 12.0–0 ♘e7

As mentioned previously, this position might also be reached after 10...♝e7. After checking various plans I finally formed a clear picture of what Black should be doing. The first step is to redeploy the knights on e5 and c7. If it looks like White is threatening to play e3-e4, Black should take countermeasures with ...f5. Depending on what White is doing, we may also look to develop counterplay on the queenside with ...♝b8 and ...b5, and/or on the kingside with ...g5.

**13.a5**

White has tried several different moves here, but since the general character of the position will remain similar, I will focus on a few illustrative examples.

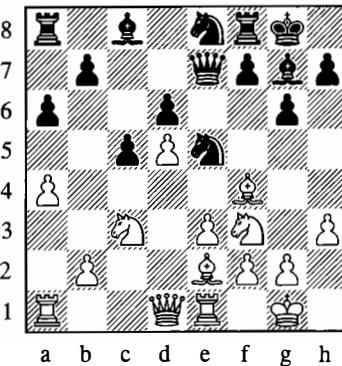
White's most popular move has been:

13.♗e1 ♞e5

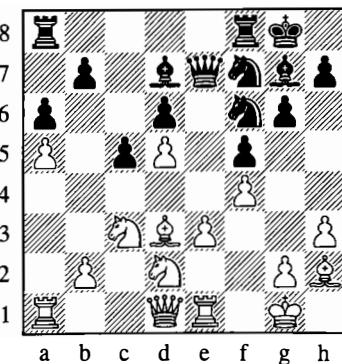
This looks to me like the most natural response.

13...h6 can be played in the 'slow-motion' style. 14.a5 ♞c7 15.♗c1 f5 16.♗b3 g5 17.♗g3 ♜b8 18.♗a4 b5 19.axb6 ♘a8 20.♗a1 ♘axb6 21.♗c3 ♘a8 22.♗c2 ♘c7

White was just a little better in Aronian – Gashimov, Linares 2010.

**14.♗d2 f5 15.♗h2 ♘f6 16.a5 ♕d7 17.f4 ♘f7 18.♗d3**

Now in Sargissian – Fier, Bursa 2010, I think Black should have played:



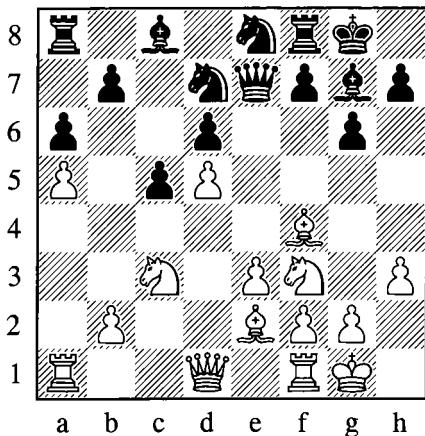
18... $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ N

If Black can prevent e3-e4 the bishop on h2 will not feel well.

19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ axb5 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$
 $\mathbb{Q}b4=$

19...axb5 20. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 21.e4 fxe4 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$
 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2\rightleftharpoons$

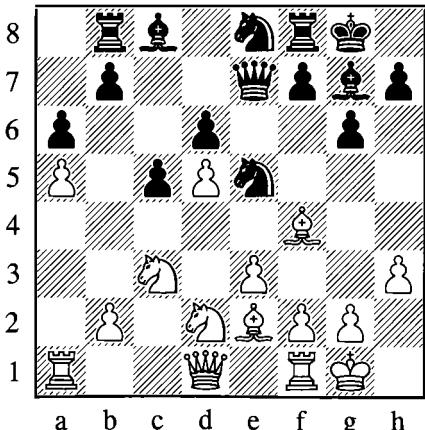


13... $\mathbb{Q}b8$

When the time is right, Black will play ...b5 and obtain counterplay down the b-file.

14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

14... $\mathbb{Q}c7?$! is less accurate due to 15.e4, but 14...f5? could be considered and may transpose to the main line within a few moves.



15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

15.e4N is not a real threat here as after 15...b5 16.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7\rightleftharpoons$ Black has adequate play.

15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ occurred in Maletin – Kopylov, Samara 2012, and here too 15...b5N 16.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ looks okay for Black.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

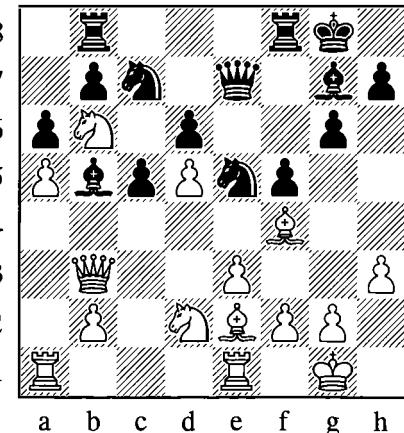
White may have prevented the pawn from going to b5, but now the bishop is heading for the same square.

16. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 17. $\mathbb{E}e1$ f5

17... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ N also looks playable, for instance:
18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}bd8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5=$

18. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$

Also after 18... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ N 19. $\mathbb{E}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}dc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ the position is close to equal.



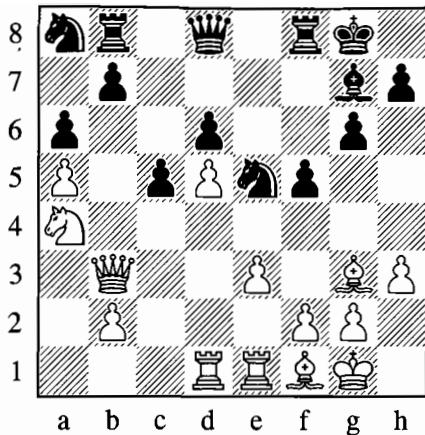
19. $\mathbb{Q}dc4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$

19... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ N 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ g5 21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{E}be8\rightleftharpoons$

20. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{E}bd8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$
23. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{E}b8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$
26. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}d8$

Although minor improvements could surely be found on both sides, the general standard of

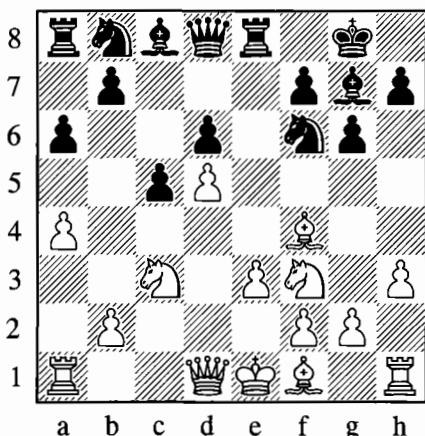
play has been quite high, and pretty thematic for the whole variation. Over the next few moves White goes astray.



27.♕b6 ♜xb6 28.axb6 ♜e7 29.♕xe5? ♜xe5

Black had much the stronger bishop and he went on to convert his advantage in Parligras – Gashimov, Porto Carras 2011.

C2) 10...♝e8

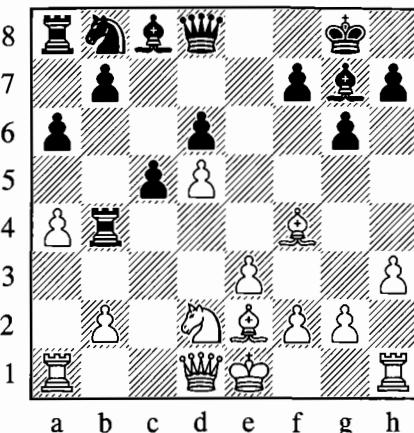


Overall I tend to prefer this active approach over the previous line. Now it is worth considering C21) 11.♗e2 followed by the more challenging C22) 11.♗d2!.

C21) 11.♗e2

This allows Black to get a good position with a typical simplifying procedure.

11...♝e4! 12.♗xe4 ♜xe4 13.♗d2 ♜b4



The rook is both safe and active here.

14.♗c4

14.0–0 ♜d7 (14...♜xb2?? 15.♗b1 ♜e5 16.♗xe5 dx5 17.♗c4=) 15.♗c4 leads to the main line.

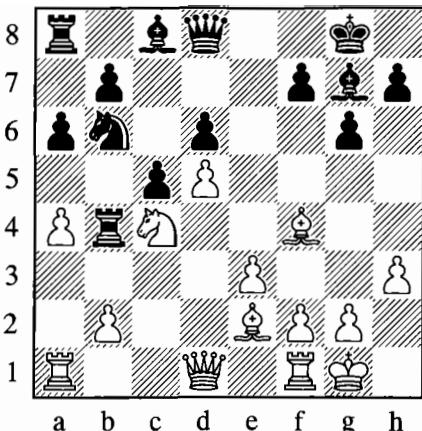
14...♝d7 15.0–0

The d6-pawn is safe for now: 15.♗xd6?? ♜xc4! 16.♗xc4 ♜b6 wins material, while 15.♗xd6?! ♜xb2 16.♗b1 ♜c3† also favours Black.

15...♝b6

This is the no-nonsense approach, forcing an equal endgame.

15...♝e5 can also be tried: 16.♗xe5 dx5 (16...♜xe5N is also okay: 17.♗xe5 dx5 18.b3 ♜f5=) 17.a5 ♜d7 (17...♜g5!N 18.♗h1 ♜f5=) 18.♗b6 ♜b8 19.♗c2 ♜f8 20.b3= Wojtaszek – Gashimov, Warsaw 2010.



16.♕xd6 ♜xf4 17.♕xc8 ♜b4

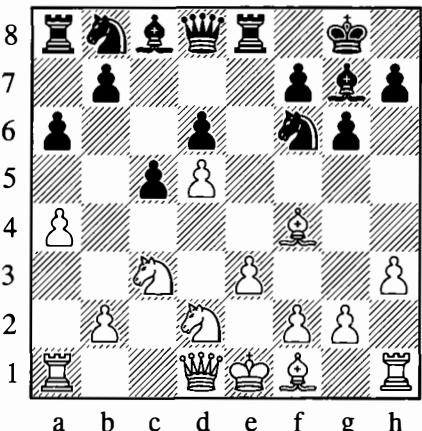
17...♜xa4N is also fine: 18.♜xa4 ♕xa4
19.♛xa4 ♜xc8=

18.♕xb6 ♜xb6 19.a5 ♜d6 20.♜a2 ♜xb2

21.♛c2 ♜g7=

Onischuk – Gashimov, Ningbo 2011.

C22) 11.♕d2!



With this move White prevents the knight exchange and plans to put the knight on c4, where it has the potential to exert troublesome pressure against the d6-pawn. To stop this, we must plant a knight on e5.

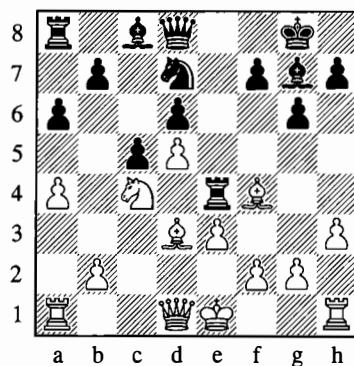
11...♝bd7!

Black can afford to leave the d6-pawn hanging.

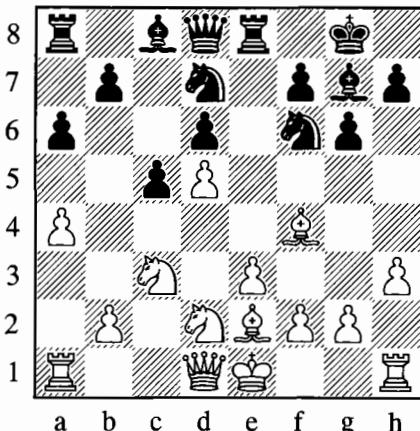
12.♞e2

12.♕xd6 is almost never played, and after 12...♝b6 13.♞xc5 ♝fxd5 14.♞xb6 ♝xb6 Black had good compensation in Biriukov – Tselkovskiy, St Petersburg 2012.

12.♛c4 ♜e4 (12...♝e5 13.♞xe5 dxе5±)
13.♛xe4 ♜xe4 14.♞d3



14...♜xc4! 15.♞xc4 Now in Kacheishvili – Chirila, Richardson 2012, the simplest continuation would have been 15...♜xb2N 16.♜a2 ♜c3† 17.♞f1 ♜e7 with obvious compensation for Black.



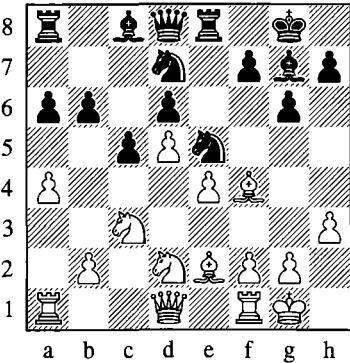
12...♝e5 13.0–0

13.a5N ♜fd7 14.0–0 transposes to the next note.

13...♝fd7 14.♛c2

It is worth mentioning a couple of other plans here.

14.e4 occurred in Dubov – Gabuzyan, Jermuk 2011, and in this position I found a nice plan for Black: 14...b6!?



Intending ...g5, ...♝f8 and ...♜a7!, followed by using the rook to support active operations on the kingside.

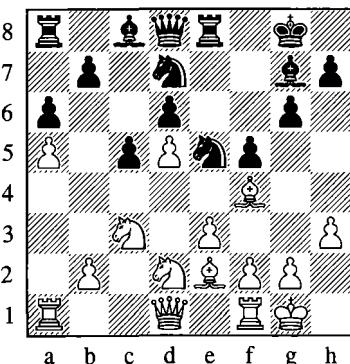
14.a5!?

This move has only been played once, but it presents an interesting challenge.

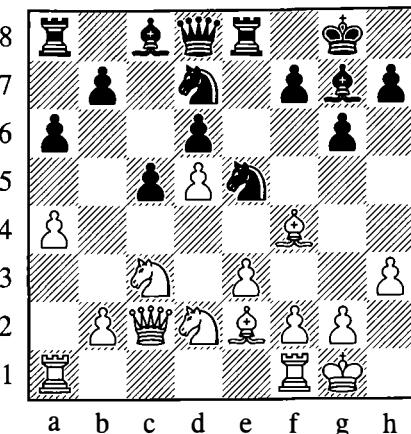
14...f5!?

14...♝b8!N 15.♛c2 f5 16.♜a3± Kostas Oreopoulos.

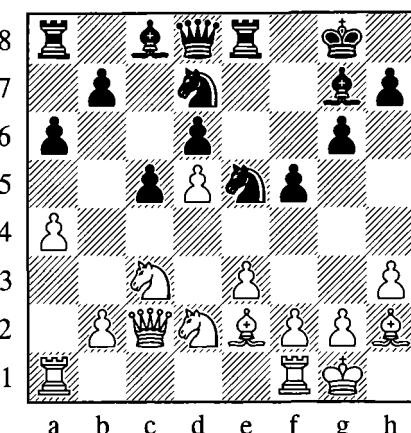
14...b5!? 15.axb6 ♜xb6 gave Black some counterplay in Kosteniuk – Cmilyte, Tbilisi (rapid) 2012, but the machines love White's position and Kosteniuk went on to win the game.

**15.♛c2 b5 16.axb6 ♜xb6?**

The machine thinks White is a bit better, but I think Black has enough counter-chances thanks to the strong knights and the slight weakness of the d5-pawn.

**14...f5**

As is typical for this line, Black takes control over the e4-square and prepares a possible pawn march on the kingside.

15.♞h2

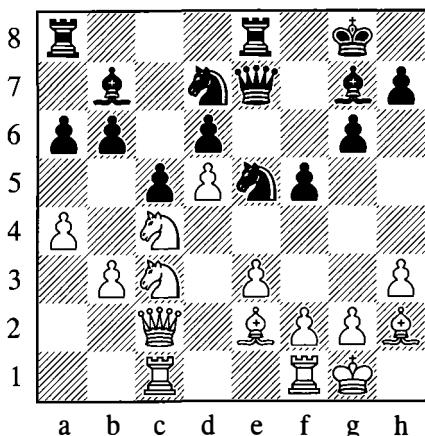
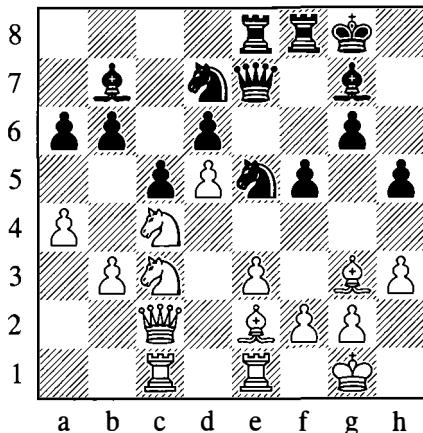
Here Black has a few ways to arrange his pieces, but the following would be my recommendation.

15...b6 16.b3 ♜b7

This may not be the typical square for the bishop in the Benoni, but here the d5-pawn is slightly weaker than normal.

17. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{W}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{B}ac1$

Kaufman claimed a slight edge for White after 18. $\mathbb{B}ab1$, but it makes no difference, and after 18... $\mathbb{B}f8!$ Black is ready to follow exactly the same plan as in the main line below. It is worth adding that 19. b4?! $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ cxb4 21. $\mathbb{B}xb4$ $\mathbb{B}ac8\#$ does not help White's cause.



18... $\mathbb{B}f8!$

The rook moves to support a future ...f4 break, while making room for its twin to slide over to e8.

19. $\mathbb{B}fe1 \mathbb{B}ae8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g3$

White does not have an active plan.

20... $h5!$

Black continues to improve his position, so in the game White felt compelled to simplify.

21. $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{Q}xe5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{W}xe5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Khairullin – Grigoryan, Rogaska Slatina 2011. Now the most accurate continuation would have been:

23... $\mathbb{W}f6N=$

Making room for the knight to come to e5. Black has a fine position.

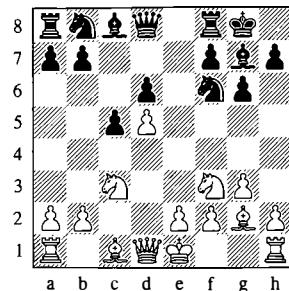
Conclusion

7...a6 leads to positions that are, on the whole, easier to handle than those from the previous chapter with 7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$. We saw that Black has no real problems in those lines in which he is allowed to play 8...b5. The system with 8.a4, 9.h3 and 10.e3 is more interesting, but here too Black has a choice of playable lines, variation C2 with 10... $\mathbb{B}e8$ being my personal preference.



Lines without e4

Fianchetto System



Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 7.g3
7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0 9.0-0

A) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$	223
B) 9...a6 10.a4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$	224
B1) 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$	224
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B3) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$	227
B31) 12.a5	228
B32) 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$	229
B33) 12.h3 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$	232
B331) 15. $\mathbb{Q}h2$	234
B332) 15.e4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$	236
B3321) 16.g4	236
B3322) 16.f4	237
B3323) 16.a5	238
B33231) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xa5$	239
B33232) 16...b5 17.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}b5$	
18. $\mathbb{Q}axb5$ axb5 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb6$	241
B332321) 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$	242
B332322) 20. $\mathbb{Q}a3$	244

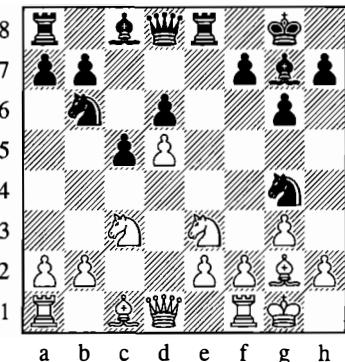
1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 7.g3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ 0-0

After White castles we will reach the basic position for the Fianchetto System. White has a solid position on the kingside and his strategy is mainly preventative. Black has the freedom to choose different plans, depending on the style of the player. The main goal is to mobilize the queenside majority, but we will see in the main line that if White prevents that, we can switch to kingside counterplay, often involving material sacrifices.

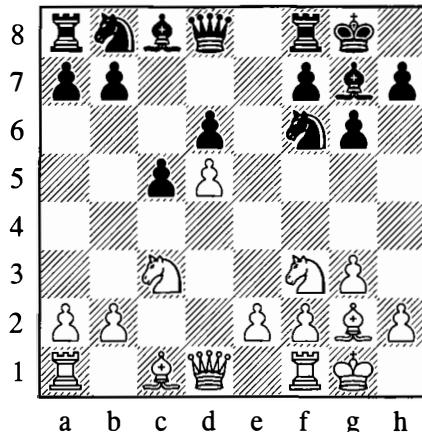
9.0-0

The Fianchetto System was recommended in Boris Avrukh's popular *Grandmaster Repertoire 2 – 1.d4 Volume Two*, which has led to it becoming particularly topical over the past few years.

The rare move order with 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ promises nothing good to White. 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ could soon lead to the main line) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}g4!$

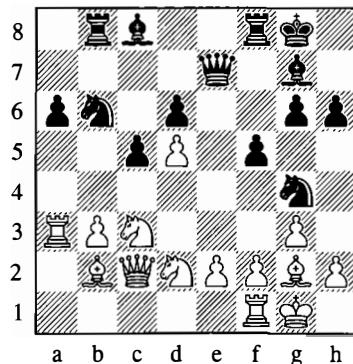


13. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ (13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ f5?) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ White invested a total of five tempos in the knight, only to see it exchanged. 14.h3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ With ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ and ...b5 on the agenda, Black was comfortably equal in Nigalidze – Pantsulaia, Tbilisi 2007.



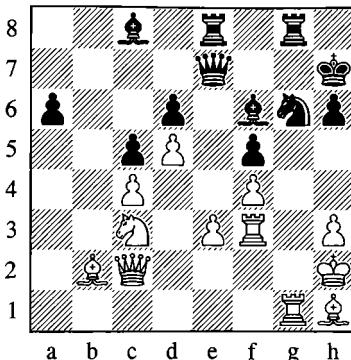
Over the next few moves Black will usually play ...a6, ... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ and ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$, and in most cases the same position will be reached. However, if White avoids the main line there are some independent possibilities. I do not have a strong preference between the different move orders, so I will present both A) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ and B) 9...a6 and allow the reader to decide which he prefers.

Here is one example of a quirky treatment: 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 10.a4 h6? (10...a6 leads to line B, but in a recent game Nigel Short showed there is room for creativity even at this early stage of the game.) 11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ A strange move. 12...a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 14.a5 b5 15.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 16.b3 $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ f5=



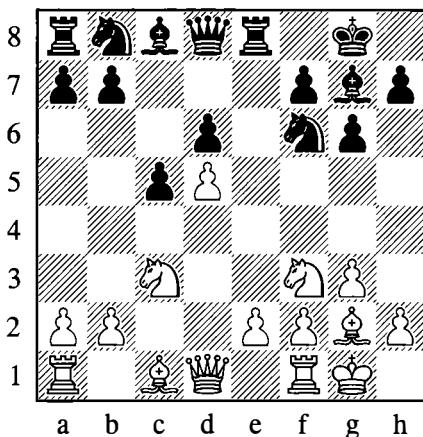
18.e3 g5 19.Qaa1 Qb7 20.Qael1 Qbe8 21.h3 Qe5 22.f4 Qg6 23.Qh2 gxf4 24.gxf4 Qh7

25.♕c4 ♕xc4 26.bxc4 ♜c8 27.♗f3 ♜g8 28.♗g1 ♜f6 29.♗h1? Allowing a nice tactic.



29...♕e5! 30.♗fg3 (30.fxe5 ♜xe5† 31.♗f4 ♜xg1 32.♗xg1 ♜g5† 33.♗f1 ♜xf4 34.exf4 ♜xf4† 35.♗f2 ♜xc4†+) 30...♗xg3 31.♗xg3 ♜xc4+ Sasikiran – Short, Gibraltar 2012.

A) 9...♝e8



This has been the choice of many of the world's top players, and is directed against the following move:

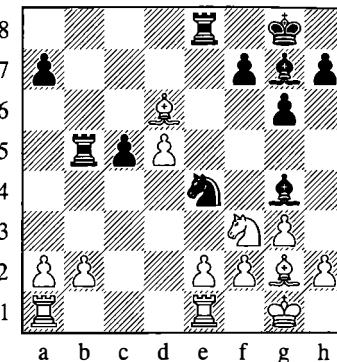
10.♗f4

The more common 10.♗d2 a6 11.a4 ♜bd7 transposes to the main line B3.

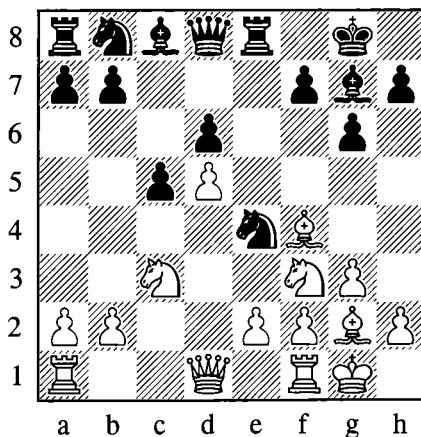
10...♞e4!!

This implies an exchange sacrifice.

A good alternative is 10...♞a6 11.♗el ♜g4 when Black manages to develop all his pieces comfortably. 12.♗b3 b5?! 13.♗xb5 ♜b8 14.♗a4 ♜d7 15.♗xa6 ♜xb5 16.♗xd6 ♜xd6 17.♗xd6 ♜e4? Black has a lot of activity.



18.♗c7?! (18.♗e5!N ♜xe5 19.♗xe5 ♜xe5 20.f3 would have maintained the balance.) 18...♗xb2? Grischuk – Gashimov, Nice 2010.



11.♗xe4 ♜xe4 12.♗d2 ♜b4

I prefer this over 12...♗xf4 13.gxf4 ♜xb2 14.♗b1 ♜g7, as I believe the position after 15.♗c4! is better for White.

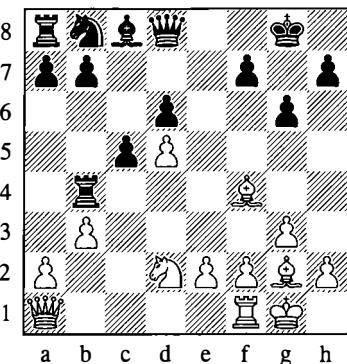
13.a3

Another idea is:

13.b3

Instead of playing to win the exchange, White offers a sacrifice of his own!

13... $\mathbb{Q}xal$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xa1$



14... $\mathbb{B}xf4!$

The bishop is too strong and our rook was in trouble anyway.

15. $gxf4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

16. $\mathbb{W}c3$ Leitao – Rocha, Sao Paulo 2011.

16... $b5!N=$

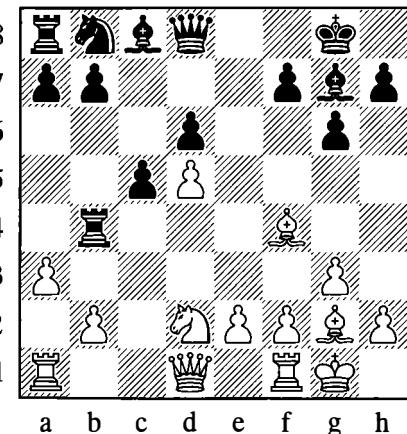
16... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{B}e1$

17. $\mathbb{B}c1?$ b6 18. $\mathbb{B}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{B}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{B}g3$ f5! 22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ followed by ... $\mathbb{W}e7$ and ... $b5$ seems okay.

17...b6 18. $\mathbb{W}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 20.f5 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Black was fine in Akesson – Brynell, Swedish League 2005.



13... $\mathbb{B}xf4!$

This is the right way to give up an exchange. Instead 13... $\mathbb{B}xb2$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{B}b6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $a xb6$ 16. $\mathbb{B}a2$ b5 (16... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$) 17. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 18. $\mathbb{B}b1$

$\mathbb{Q}c7$ 19.e4 was somewhat better for White in Moiseenko – Miroshnichenko, Kharkov 2009.

14. $gxf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 15. $\mathbb{B}a2$

15. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ allows Black to claim a second extra pawn.

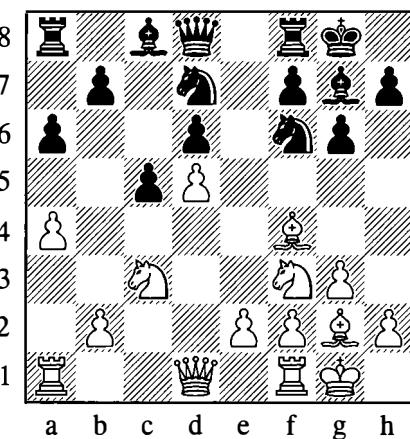
15... $\mathbb{Q}g7\bar{\mathbb{B}}$

With a pawn for the exchange and a mighty dark-squared bishop, Black was not worse in Alburt – Peters, South Bend 1981.

B) 9...a6 10.a4 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

From here we will analyse the sidelines **B1) 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$** and **B2) 11.e4**, followed by the main line **B3) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$.**

B1) 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$



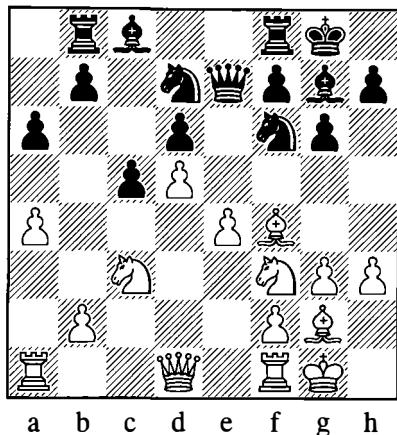
With this move White avoids the sharpest variations and just plays normal and solid moves in the centre. Black does not have the same antidote as in the previous line, but even so he has nothing to fear.

11... $\mathbb{W}e7$

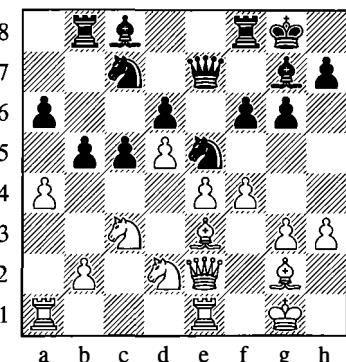
This line is the most popular nowadays although I think 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ is also fine. One example continued: 12. $\mathbb{B}c1$ $\mathbb{B}e8$ 13.b4 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b6 15. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}hf6$ 16.h3 $\mathbb{Q}b7=$ Gleizerov – Oleksienko, Romania 2008.

12.h3 $\mathbb{B}b8$ 13.e4

Here is another line where White gets nowhere: 13. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ f6 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ f5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}e8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5=$ Grigorov – Miroshnichenko, Greece 2009.

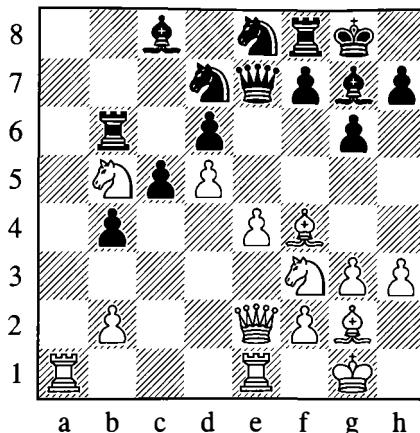
**13...b5**

The solid 13... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{B}e1$ f6 is also playable, but generally I don't like to block the g7-bishop. 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ b5 18.f4 Ganguly – Naiditsch, Melilla 2011. Now the most logical continuation is:



18... $\mathbb{Q}f7N$ 19.axb5 axb5 20. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ b4 21. $\mathbb{Q}a4$
The position is double-edged, but Black cannot be entirely happy with the pawn on f6.

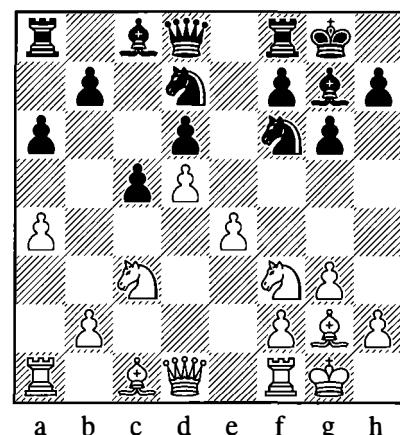
**14.axb5 axb5 15. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}e2$ b4
17. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{B}b6$**



The knight on b5 can avoid immediate capture, but it remains in an odd position.

18. $\mathbb{Q}a7$ $\mathbb{B}b7\rightleftharpoons$

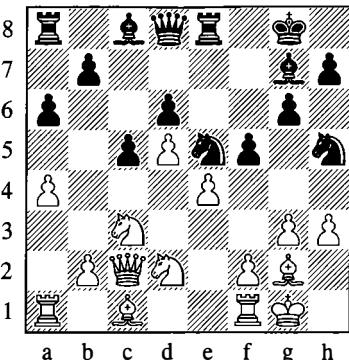
With mutual chances, De Morais – Coelho, corr. 1993.

B2) 11.e4

A rare move. Now White will not have time to transfer his knight to c4.

11... $\mathbb{B}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{B}e1$

12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 14.h3 f5 can be compared with the main line B33. Here the presence of the knight on d2 is a big disappointment for the bishop on c1.



15.f4? (15.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}de4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$)
 15... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 16.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5\mp$
 Milicevic – Gerzhoy, Toronto 2006.

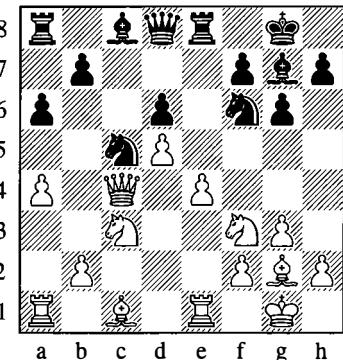
12...c4!?

This dynamic move implies a pawn sacrifice. Black can of course choose a more solid move, but I believe in his chances. White must try to capture the brave pawn, otherwise Black will get an easy game after ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$.

13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

13. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xc4?$

White can try a counter-sacrifice with 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$?! $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xe1\bar{\infty}$.



14...b5!

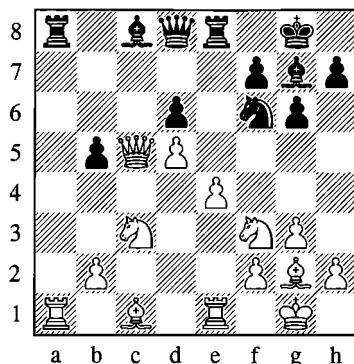
This simple but pleasing move releases the dynamic energy in Black's position.

15.axb5!?

The best chance to trick the opponent.

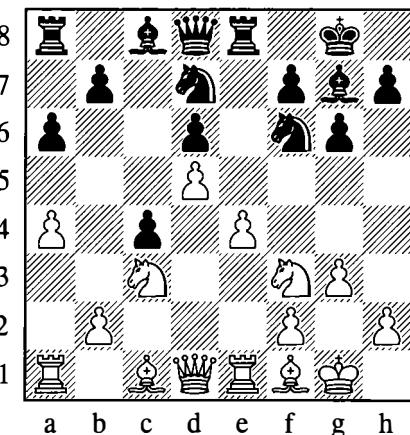
15. $\mathbb{W}a2$ b4 $\bar{\infty}$

15. $\mathbb{W}f1$ b4 16.e5 dx5 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b3+$ Dol
 – Faber, corr. 1995.
 15...axb5 16. $\mathbb{W}xc5$



16... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$!

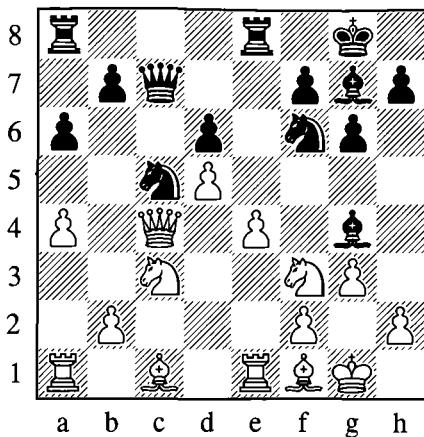
16... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$? is a bad idea: 17. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ b4 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$
 $\mathbb{W}c7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 21.d6 \pm
 17. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}b4$ $\mathbb{W}b8!\bar{\infty}$



13... $\mathbb{W}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d4$

The more patient 14.h3 b6 15. $\mathbb{W}d4$ was played in Steckner – Kopp, corr. 1987, and here Black should have continued developing with 15... $\mathbb{Q}b7N$. From here play may continue: 16. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xc4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8\uparrow$ Black has full compensation and White has a problem with the bishop on c1.

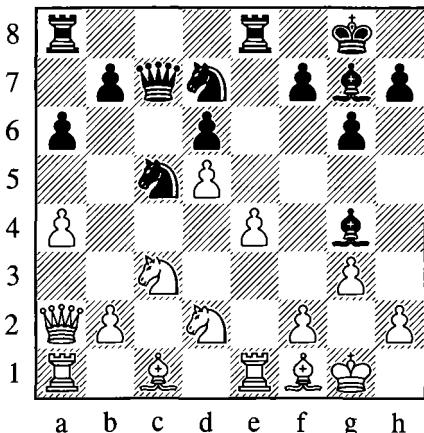
14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$

**16.Qd2**

16.Qg2 also enables Black to obtain a nice position: 16...Qfd7 17.Qf4 Qb6 18.Wf1 Qxc3 19.bxc3 Qxe4† Elsness – Emms, Gausdal 1995.

16...Qfd7 17.Wa2N

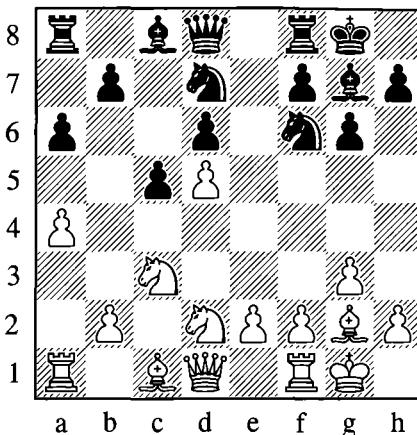
I think White should aim to improve on 17.Qe3 Qh5 18.Wb4 Qe5 19.h3 as played in Alvarez Villar – Esses, e-mail 1997, after which 19...g5N∞ would have maintained a good position for Black. The positioning of the white pieces seems distinctly odd to me.

**17...f5**

17...Qe5 is also fine, for instance: 18.Qe3 Qd7 19.h3 f5∞

18.h3 Qh5∞

Almost all the white pieces are sitting less than prettily, so I think Black is fine.

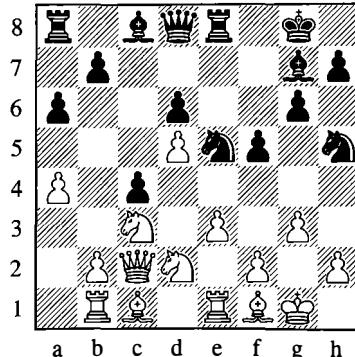
B3) 11.Qd2

This is the main line. White wants to put the knight on c4 and then push his pawns in the centre.

11...We8

Now there is **B31) 12.a5**, **B32) 12.Qc4**, and the main line **B33) 12.h3**.

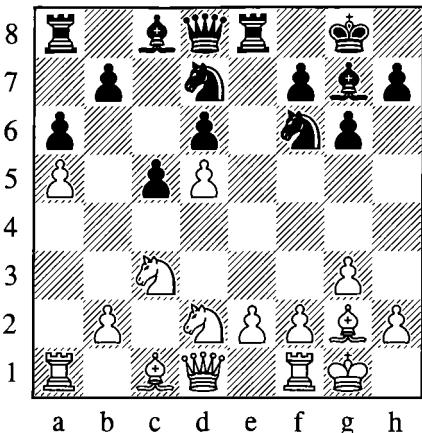
Instead 12.Wb1 aims for a rapid b2-b4, but 12...Qh5! puts paid to that idea. Here is a nice example of Black's chances: 13.Qe1 Qe5 14.Wc2 f5 15.e3 c4 16.Qf1



16...Qd3! 17.Qxd3 cxd3 18.Wxd3 f4! Black

had a strong initiative for the pawn in Leong – Palliser, York 2009.

B31) 12.a5



12...b5

This is my preference, although several games have continued 12... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{Q}ed7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4=$ followed by an early handshake.

13.axb6 $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

Another option is:

14.e4

Black is fine here, since his knight controls the c4-square and he is free to develop the remaining pieces.

14... $\mathbb{B}b8$

The less common 14...a5 also leads to a good position. 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$ a4 16.h3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17. $\mathbb{B}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ Black has made all the normal moves here. 18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 19. $\mathbb{B}xf1$ This was Ilincic – I. Rajlich, Budapest 2006, and now after 19...c4N 20. $\mathbb{Q}db1$ (20. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ $\mathbb{B}xa1$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}bxc4$ $\mathbb{W}e7\#$) 20... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 22. $\mathbb{B}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}d4=$ Black has a comfortable position.

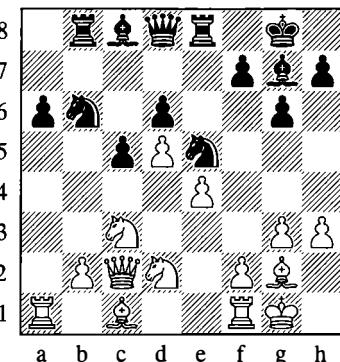
15. $\mathbb{W}c2$

Now we have to decide where to put the knight.

15... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$?

There is also 15... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ with the same ideas as in the previous line. 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ a5 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 18. $\mathbb{B}d1$ a4= Soppe – Hoffman, Buenos Aires 1998.

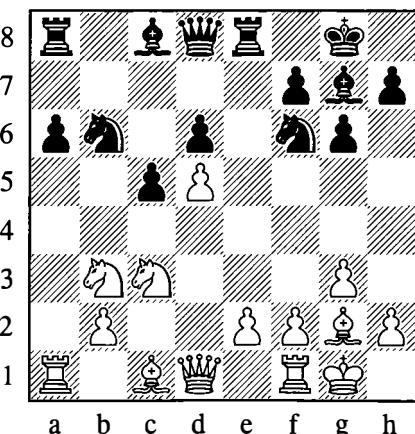
16.h3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$



17.f4

White preferred the more patient 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ in Baburin – J. Cobb, Birmingham 2001. Here I would suggest 17...a5!N 18.f4 $\mathbb{Q}ed7$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6=$ with good chances for Black. 17... $\mathbb{Q}ec4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $f5\uparrow$

Black obtained good play in Willsch – Heller, Schleswig Holstein 1991, and several subsequent games.



14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

This is the most interesting continuation and it leads to a complex game.

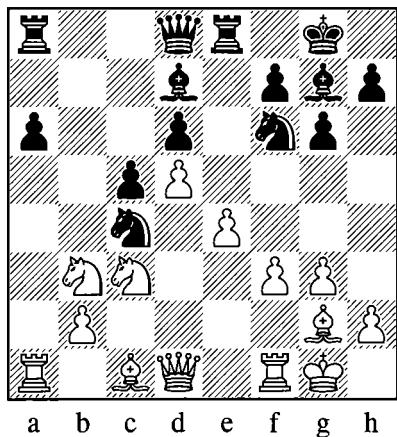
It is important to mention that Black has a solid equalizing option: 14... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 15. $\mathbb{B}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 16. $\mathbb{B}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4=$ Black offers a move repetition. White does not have to accept it, but he gains no advantage from declining, for instance: 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{B}b4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{B}xb3=$ Redolf – Mulder van Leens Dijkstra, corr. 1987.

15.f3

15. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 16. $\mathbb{B}a3$ occurred in Stempin – Nowak, Poznan 1997, and now after 16... $\mathbb{W}d7N\rightleftharpoons$ Black's pieces are well placed and he has no problems.

15... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 16.e4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Note the usefulness of the knight on c4 in preventing the white knight from going to a5. The young Italian GM Sabino Brunello has reached this position three times with White but has failed to achieve anything special.



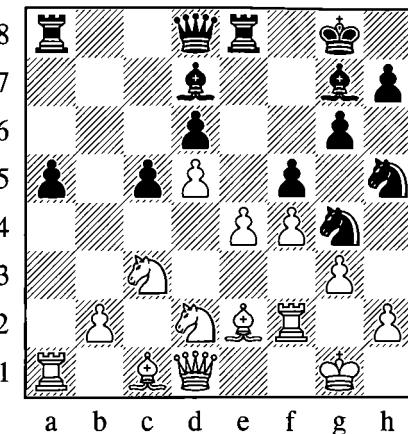
17. $\mathbb{B}f2$

Brunello's most recent outing with this line continued 17. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5=$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}h3?$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1\mp$ Brunello – Naiditsch, Plovdiv 2012.

17...a5 18. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ f5 21.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$

This natural move forces White to exchange a valuable bishop.

The more adventurous 21...fxe4!N is also possible, for instance: 22. $\mathbb{Q}dxe4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}gxh5$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xh5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\infty$



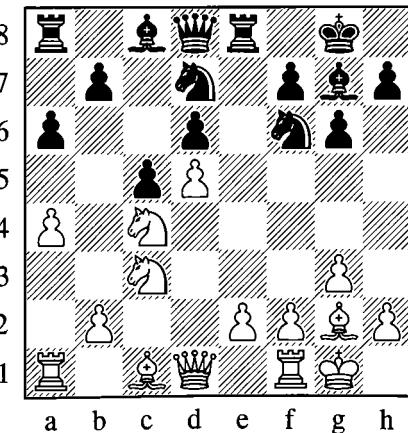
22. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ fxg4 23. $\mathbb{Q}e2?!$

More challenging is: 23. $\mathbb{Q}c4N$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 24.e5 dxe5 25.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5\infty$

23... $\mathbb{Q}d4\sharp$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6\bar{\mp}$

White had to work hard for the draw in Brunello – Rotstein, Brescia 2009.

B32) 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$



With this move White tries to save a tempo by omitting h2-h3, but this policy may easily backfire.

12...Qe5

Black proceeds analogously to the main line.

13.Qa3

This ambitious move is riskier for White than for Black.

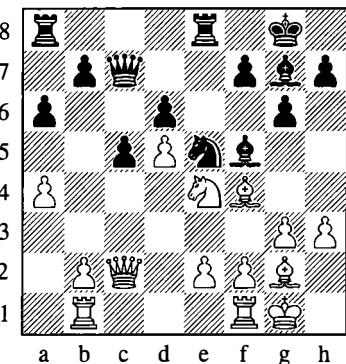
Objectively White should probably exchange knights:

13.Qxe5 Qxe5

Black is practically assured of equality here, but he is unlikely to achieve much more. The knight exchange should generally favour the side with less space, especially when it means eliminating the powerful knight on c4.

14.e4

14.Qf4 Qe8 15.Qc2 also leaves Black with a few good options. One noteworthy game continued: 15...Qg4 16.Qab1 Qc7 17.h3 Qe5 18.Qe4 Qf5



Black was comfortable and after 19.g4 Qxe4 20.Qxe4 b5 21.b4? c4† he had a big advantage in Arkell – Vallejo Pons, Rijeka 2010.

14...Qe8 15.h3

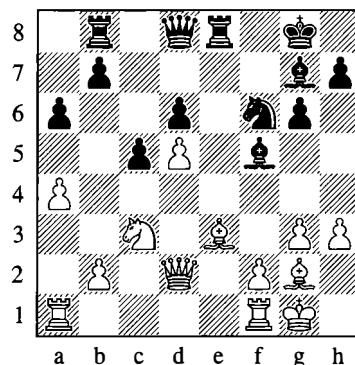
15.Qf4 Qb8 16.a5 is well met by 16...b5! 17.axb6 Qxb6 18.Qc2 Qg4 19.h3 Qe5. The b2-pawn was weak and White was left without a truly promising plan in D. Fernandez – Kacheishvili, Orlando 2011.

15...Qb8 16.Qd3

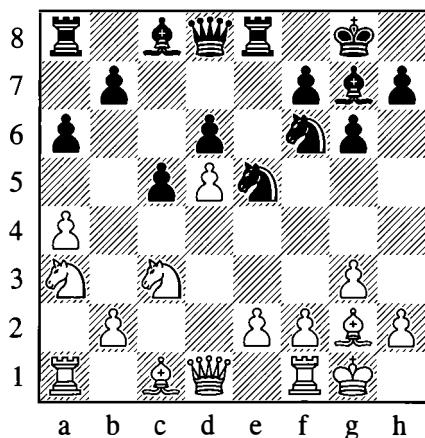
16.Qb1 was played in Palliser – Richardson, Birmingham 2001, and now after 16...b5N 17.axb5 axb5 18.b4 Qd7! Black has nothing to worry about.

16...Qd7 17.Qe3 f5 18.Qc2 Qf6 19.exf5 Qxf5 20.Qd2

Kempinski – Istratescu, Plovdiv 2008. Here I found a modest improvement:

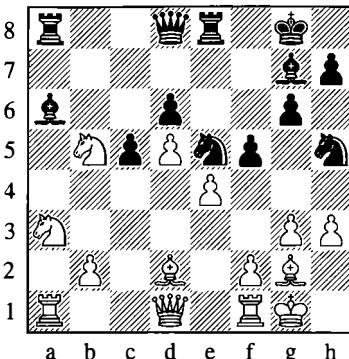
**20...Qd7!N**

Based on the following point:

21.g4 Qe4†**13...Qh5 14.h3**

In most games White has felt the need to cover the g4-square anyway, but now the problem becomes apparent: Black is by no means forced to transpose to the main line by putting his rook on b8.

Here is another nice line illustrating Black's resources: 14.e4 f5 15.h3 b5! Black has managed to open the whole board, while conveniently taking advantage of the rook's position on a8 instead of b8. 16.axb5 axb5 17.♕cxb5 ♕a6 18.♕d2



18...fxe4!N (18...♗b6 is also excellent and led to an eventual victory in Oglolblin – Obukhov, Alushta 2004, but the text move is even stronger.) 19.♕e1 ♗b8! 20.♕c3 ♘d3 21.♗xe4 ♘f8! White's position is on the verge of collapse.

14...f5!

14...♗b8 15.e4 ♘d7 leads to the main line, but from this position Black can do better.

15.f4?!

This is not the best move, but I want to highlight an important improvement over the existing games. Here are a few other examples:

15.e4 b5! gives Black excellent play, while once again highlighting the usefulness of the rook on a8.

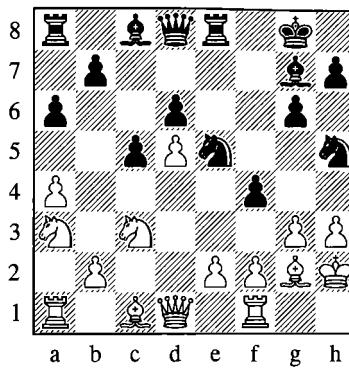
15.♘h2

This has been White's most popular choice. He wants to play f2-f4, but Black has a convincing answer.

15...f4!

15...g5!? intending 16.e4g4 is also promising,

but the text move is even more convincing. Soon White may regret the decision not to exchange the powerful knight on e5.

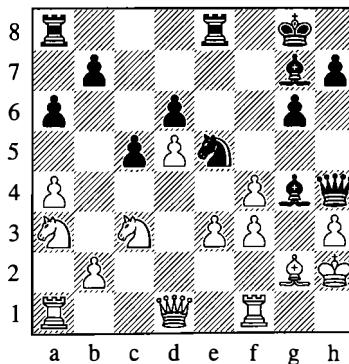


16.♗xf4?

This loses practically by force, but the situation is already bleak for White:

16.♗f3 occurred in Cocconcelli – Sipos, Lugano 2012, and now 16...fxg3† 17.fxg3 b5! gives Black a huge advantage across the board.

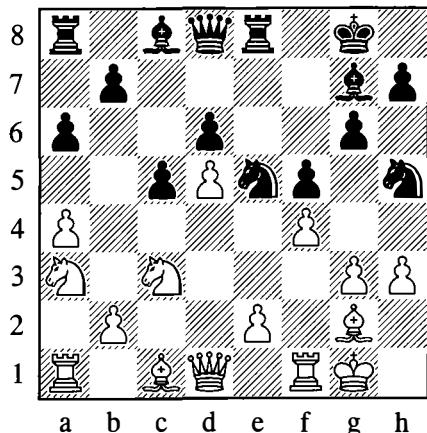
16.gxf4N ♗h4! 17.e3 ♘g4+
16.e3N fxg3† 17.fxg3 b5!† 18.axb5? axb5
19.♕cxb5 ♘g5+
16...♗xf4 17.gxf4 ♗h4! 18.e3 ♘g4 19.f3



19...♗xf3†! 20.♗xf3 ♘xe3 21.♗xe3 ♘xd1
22.♗xd1 ♘xf4† 23.♔h1

Gonzalez Perez – Aroshidze, Barbera del Valles 2011. Here the easiest way to secure victory would have been:

23...♗e5N+–



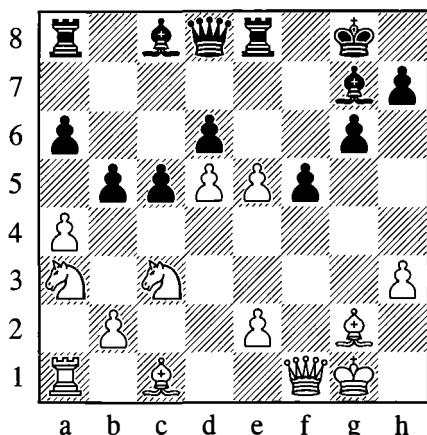
15...Qxg3!N

It is strange that nobody has played this thematic sacrifice.

15...Qf7 is, to be fair, also not bad. One example continued: 16.Qh2?! (16.Qe1 Qd7+) 16...b5! 17.axb5? axb5 18.Qxb5 Qa6 19.Qb1 Qd7 20.Qc3 Qxc3 21.bxc3 Qxe2+ Tuhrim – Can, Rethymnon 2011.

16.fxe5 Qxf1 17.Qxf1 b5!

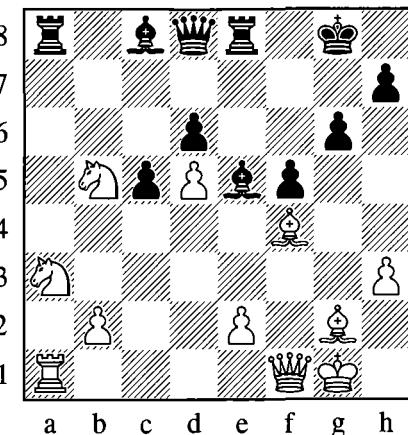
Yet again we see this move. It is important to open more files and diagonals.



18.axb5

18.e6 b4 19.Qc4 bxc3 20.bxc3 a5! The strong knight must be destroyed! (20...Qxc3?! 21.Qf4 Qxa1 22.Qxa1) 21.Qf4 Qf8 22.e4 Qa6+

18...axb5 19.Qxb5 Qxe5 20.Qf4



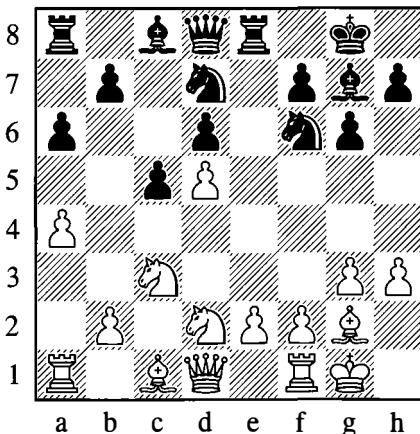
20...Qa6!

Better than 20...Qxb2 21.Qb1 Qxa3 22.Qxd6 Qf8 23.Qxc8 Qxc8 when White has some compensation for the exchange.

21.Qxe5 Qxe5 22.Qc3 Qb8+

Material is approximately even, but Black's superior coordination makes him the clear favourite.

B33) 12.h3



Finally we arrive at the main line. With the black knight heading for e5 at some point, it is useful for White to take the g4-square under control in advance.

12...♞b8

It is too early to put the knight on e5, so Black needs a waiting move of sorts, and this is the most purposeful one available.

13.♘c4

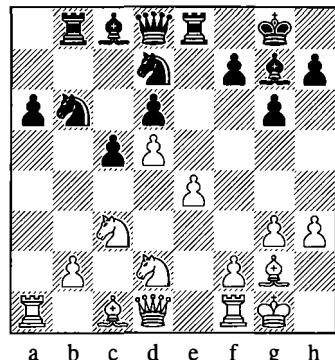
Black was threatening ...b5, so White's choices are limited.

13.a5

This is not dangerous for Black.

13...b5 14.axb6 ♘xb6 15.e4
15.♗c2 a5 16.♗d1 a4 17.e4 ♘a6=

15...♘fd7

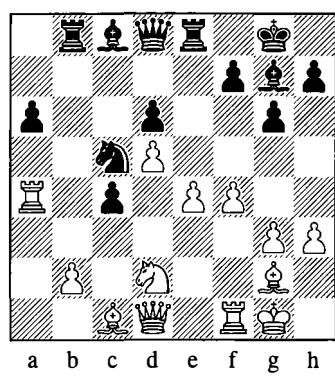
**16.f4!**

This has been the most popular move but it is not a good one.

16.♗c2 ♗c7 17.♗d1 c4 18.♗e3 ♘e5
19.♗a3 ♘c5= V. Alterman – Yudasin, Haifa 1993.

16...c4= 17.♗a4 ♘xa4 18.♗xa4 ♘c5

There are too many weaknesses in the white camp.

**19.♗a3**

19.♗xc4 a5 20.e5 ♘a6 (20...♗b6 21.♗c2! ♘e4† 22.♗h2 ♘xd2 23.♗xd2 dxе5=)

21.♗xc5 ♘xf1 22.♗xf1 dxс5=

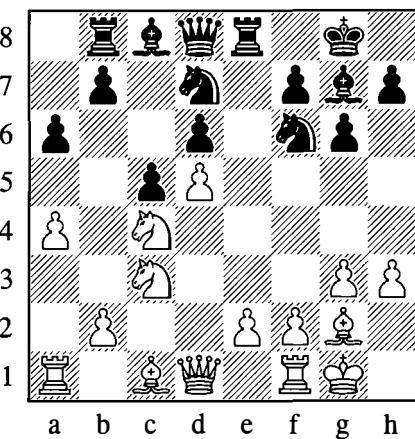
19...♗b4

With the following point:

21.♗xc4? ♘b5 22.b3 ♘xb3! 23.♗xb3

Now in A. Mohamed – Forster, Duisburg 1992, Black overlooked a simple win.

23...♘a4N+

**13...♘e5**

The other main line is 13...♗b6 14.♗a3 ♘d7 15.a5 ♘c8, with a solid but somewhat passive position for Black. I prefer the text move as it is much more active.

14.♗a3

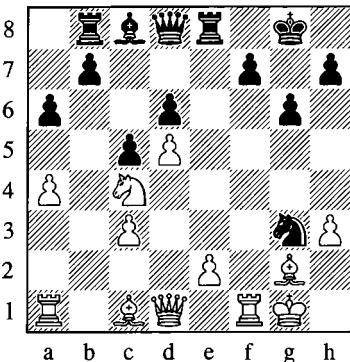
As usual, 14.♗xe5 ♘xe5 does nothing to challenge the black position, so I will not discuss it other than by giving a few more moves from a recent game: 15.♗f4 ♘e8 16.a5 b5 17.axb6 ♘xb6= Michalik – Antoniewski, Slovakia 2011.

14...♘h5

The second member of the black cavalry enters the battlefield! Without this the previous move would make no sense, as the knight would have been driven back by f2-f4.

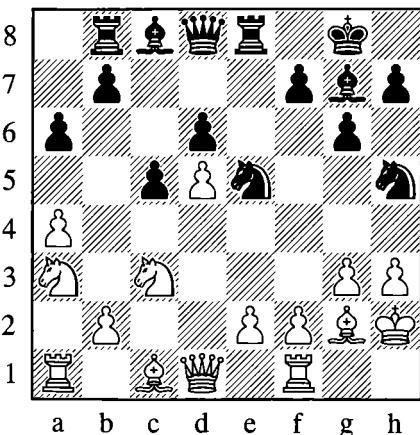
After the text move Black's main plan is to play ...f5 and attack on the kingside. Here White sometimes plays **B331) 15.♗h2** but the main line is **B332) 15.e4**.

15.f4? can be refuted as follows: 15...♝xg3 16.fxе5 ♜xe5 17.♗c4 (17.♗f2N ♜h4→) 17...♝xc3 18.bxc3



18...♝xh3! 19.♗f2 (19.♗xh3 ♜h4→+) 19...♝xg2 20.♗xg2 ♜e4 21.♗f3 ♜h4† Lagowski – Babula, Olomouc 2004.

B331) 15.♗h2



15...f5

This is the main move, but there is an intriguing alternative:

15...g5!?

Black's idea is to discourage f2-f4, thus

enabling his knight to remain on e5, which will in turn keep the white one tied back on a3.

16.f4?

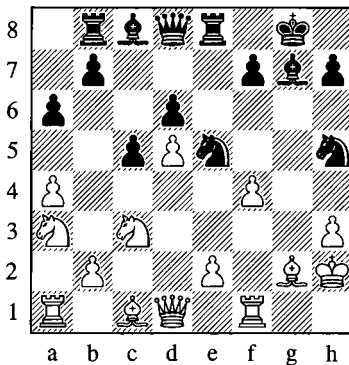
The obvious question is: what happens if White stubbornly tries to remove the knight anyway?

16.♗c2 occurred in L. Szabo – Christiansen, Hastings 1981, and here I like the look of: 16...♜f6!N 17.♗e3 (17.f4? gxf4 18.gxf4? [18.♗xf4 ♜g6†] 18...♜g6→+) 17...♜g6 18.♗c2 f5 19.♗d2 ♜f8†

Maybe White's best is 16.e4N g4 17.f4 (or 17.hxg4!N ♜xg4 18.f3 ♜d7 19.♗h3→) 17...♜g6 18.♗d3 with unclear play, Skjoldager – Rydell, Helsingør 2012.

16...gxf4 17.gxf4??

The lesser evil is 16.♗xf4 as played in Sisak – Marusak, Bratislava 1991, but in that game Black obtained a clear positional advantage after eliminating the bishop on f4.



17...♞g4†!

Or 17...♜h4! 18.♗e1 ♜g4† 19.♗g1 ♜xe1 20.♗xe1 ♜d4† 21.e3 ♜xe3→+ 18.hxg4 ♜h4† 19.♗g1 ♜xg4→+

White is defenceless.

16.f4

The following line shows the importance of blocking the f-pawn:

16.e4?! f4!

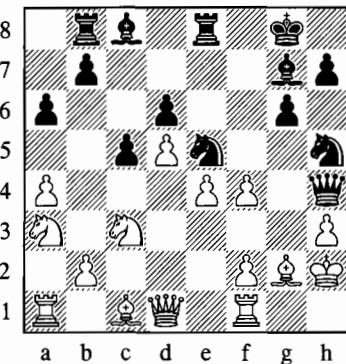
Boris Gelfand once exchanged on e4, but

the text move is much stronger.

17.gxf4

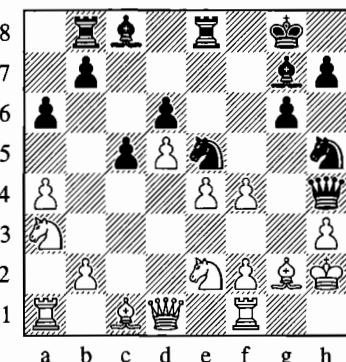
I also considered 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 18.gxf4 $\mathbb{W}h4!$ and now 19.fxe5 $\mathbb{W}f4\uparrow$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 21. $\mathbb{B}e1$ $\mathbb{B}f8$ or 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f3\uparrow$ and Black wins in both cases.

17... $\mathbb{W}h4!$



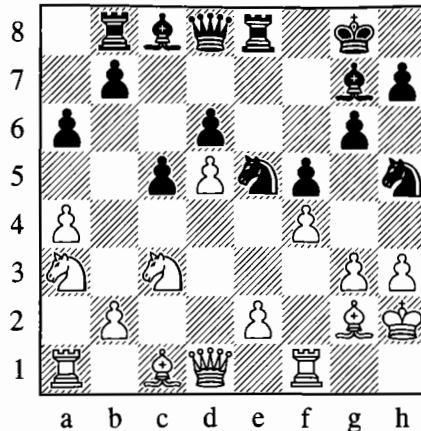
18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

There is also no joy for White after: 18.fxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5\uparrow$ 19.f4 (19. $\mathbb{Q}g1?$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 20. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}g4\uparrow$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{B}f8!$ sees the black rook joining the attack with decisive effect.) 19... $\mathbb{W}g3\uparrow$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2\uparrow$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}h4\uparrow$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}d4\uparrow$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ Black will emerge with a clearly better endgame.



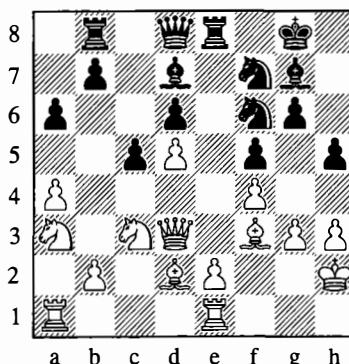
18... $\mathbb{Q}f3\uparrow$! 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xh3\uparrow$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}xf3$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 23.fxg3 $\mathbb{B}xe4$

Black soon won in S. Andreev – Srbis, Cetinje 2008.

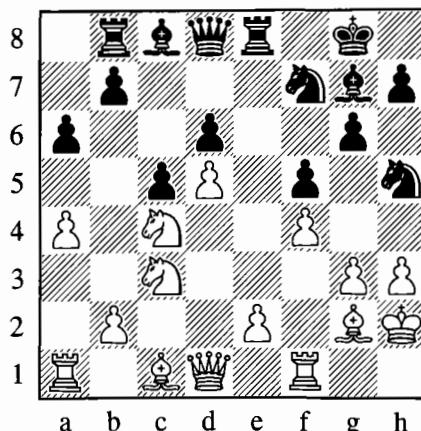


16... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Another instructive example continued: 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ h5 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3??$



20...b5! 21.axb5 axb5 22. $\mathbb{Q}xcb5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$
Black's strong pawn sacrifice enabled him to coordinate his pieces to good effect in Evdokimov – Ponkratov, Belgorod 2008.



17...Qf6

Another idea is 17...b6 18.e4 Qf6 as in Cuevas Rodriguez – Marin, Andorra 1997.

18.Qc2 Qd7 19.a5 Qb5 20.Qb6 Qc7 21.Qe1 Qe7 22.Qd2 Qbe8=

Barmbold – Philippe, Germany 2007.

B332) 15.e4

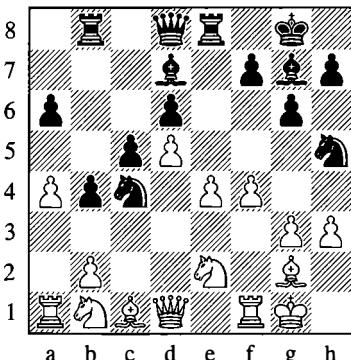
This is the main line and by far the most popular move. White wants to stop ...f5.

15...Qd7

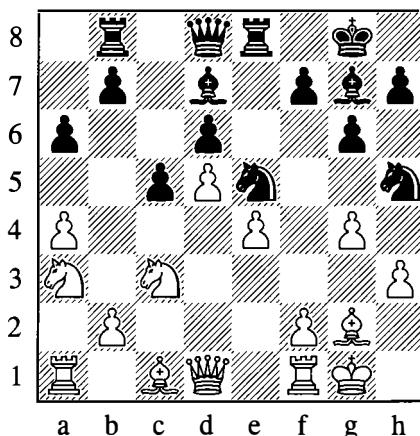
Leaving both knights in danger, but completing development and preparing to launch the b-pawn. 15...Qf8 16.Qh2 f5 17.f4 b5 is another possibility, but I consider it much more risky for Black.

Now we have another division between **B3321) 16.g4**, **B3322) 16.f4** and **B3323) 16.a5**.

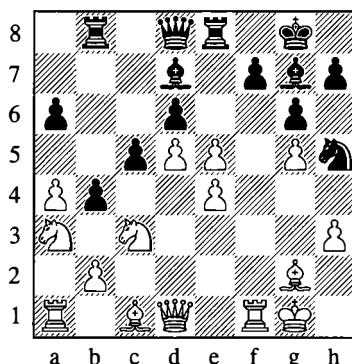
16.Qe2?! is feeble: 16...b5 17.f4?! (17.g4 Qf6 18.Qc2 c4 19.axb5 axb5† 20.Qd4? Qd3 21.Qe3 Qxe4+– Zatonskikh – Kacheishvili, Gibraltar 2011.) 17...b4 18.Qb1 Qc4†



19.Qb3?! Qa5 20.Qf3 f5 with a monstrous initiative for Black in Hossain – Narayanan, Delhi 2010.

B3321) 16.g4**16...b5!?**

I prefer this counterattacking move, although 16...Qf6 is also playable: 17.g5 Qh5 18.f4 Okay the knight is trapped, but don't worry! 18...b5 19.fxe5 b4

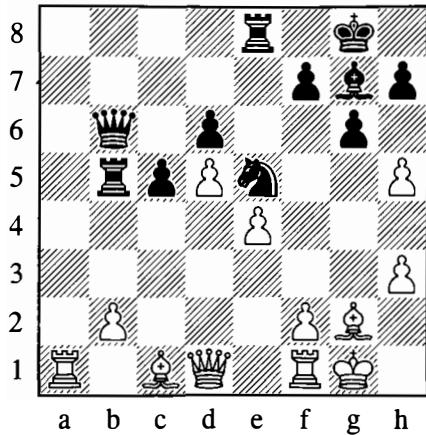


20.Qc4N (20.Qf3? bxa3! It is important to eliminate the knight that could otherwise have gone to c4. 21.Qxa3 Qxe5 22.Qxf7† Qh8† Porat – Dobrowolski, Pardubice 2008.) 20...bxc3 21.bxc3 dxe5∞

17.axb5

Prudent, unlike 17.gxh5?! b4 18.Qe2 bxa3 19.Qxa3 c4 which gave Black excellent play for his pawn in M. Kraemer – Maslik, Austria 2010.

17...axb5 18.Qxb5 Qxb5 19.Qxb5 Qxb5
20.gxh5 ♜b6†



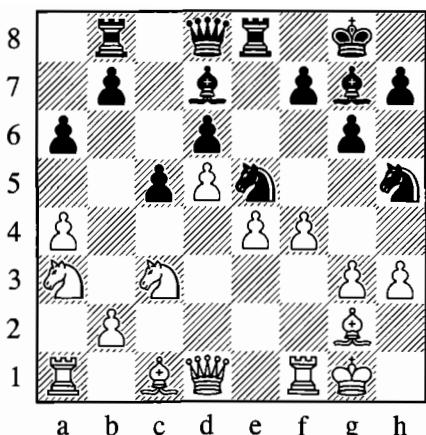
21.Qa2 ♜b3 22.h6

Alternatively after 22.h4 Qd3 23.Qe3! ♜xb2 24.Qxb2 Qxb2 25.Qe2 Qa4 26.Qg4 White drummed up just enough counterplay to maintain the balance in Mikheev – I. Brooks, corr. 2007.

22...Qf6 23.Qd2 ♜xb2=

Murden – Lambert, e-mail 2003.

B3322) 16.f4

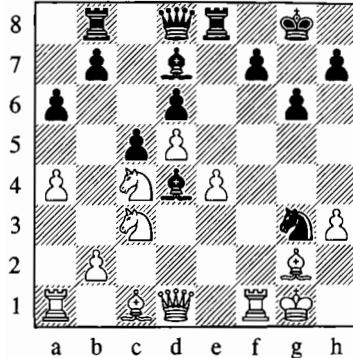


Showing a good appetite may not be healthy for White.

16...Qxg3 17.fxe5 Qxe5 18.Qf2

There are two noteworthy alternatives:

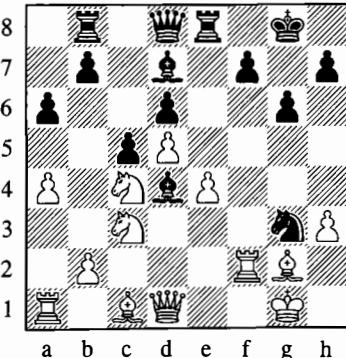
18.Qc4 Qd4†



19.Qf2

19.Qh2 Qxf1† 20.Qxf1 b5† 21.Qxd6? Qe5† 22.Qf4 Qf6→ Kuligowski – Levitt, Germany 1987.

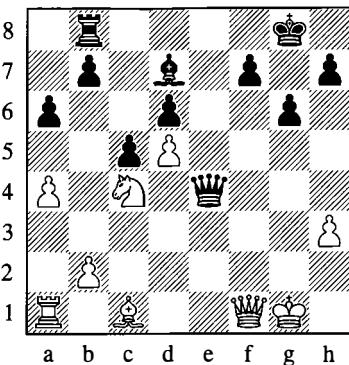
I could not find games with 19.Qe3N. My computer thinks it is the best chance for White, but Black should still be more than happy. 19...b5 20.axb5 axb5 (Another good line is: 20...Qxf1 21.Qxf1 Qxe3† 22.Qxe3 axb5†) 21.Qxd4 cxd4 22.Qxd6 dxc3 23.Qxe8 Qxf1 24.Qxf1 Qb6† 25.Qh1 Qxe8 26.bxc3 Qc8† Black has the more comfortable position.



19...Qxf2† 20.Qxf2 Wh4 21.Qg1 Qxe4 22.Qxe4 Qxe4 23.Qxe4 Qxe4 24.Qf1

This was Medvegy – Sax, Hungary 2006,

and here Black could have capitalized on his advantage with:



24... $\mathbb{W}xd5N$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 26. $\mathbb{W}xh3$ $\mathbb{W}xc4\pm$

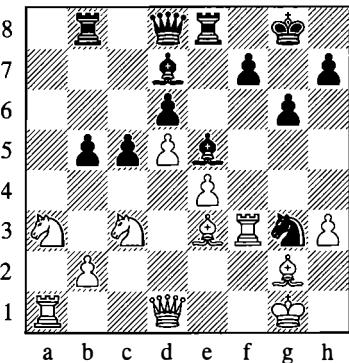
Black has too many pawns in this endgame.

18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

This was played in a game that I had the opportunity to witness from a short distance.

18... $b5$ 19. $axb5$ $axb5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$

20. $\mathbb{Q}axb5N$ is better although 20... $\mathbb{W}h4!$ → still favours Black. (But note that 20... $\mathbb{Q}xb5?$ should be avoided due to 21. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{E}xb5$ 22. $\mathbb{E}xg3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d3\pm.$)



20... $f5!$ 21. $\mathbb{E}xg3?!$

This does not help, but White's position is bad after other moves too.

21... $\mathbb{Q}xg3-$

Berg – Hoyos, Tromso 2010.

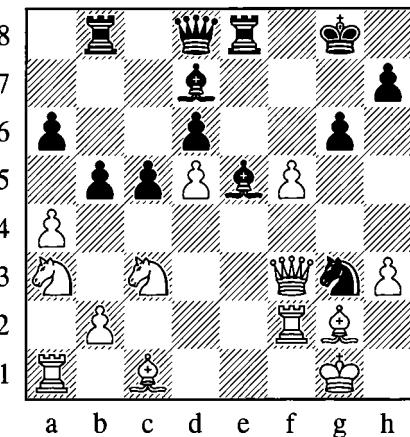
18... $b5$

Once again Black's initiative extends across the entire board. I believe he has, as a bare minimum, enough compensation for the knight.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xc3?N$ 19. $bxcc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $b5$ 21. $axb5$ $axb5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $f5=$ is a playable alternative, but the text move is more thematic.

19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $f5$ 20. $exf5$

Here it was necessary to improve on Black's play in the game Maletin – Vocaturo, Balaguer 2010.



20... $\mathbb{Q}xf5N$

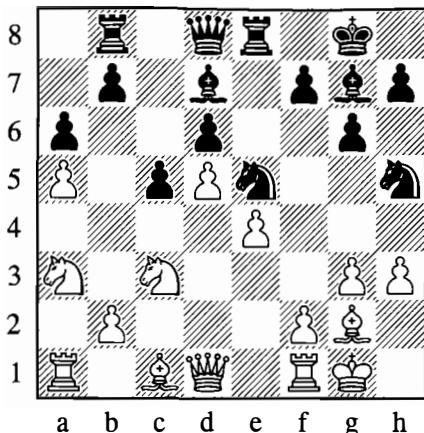
Black can even consider 20... $gxsf5!?$ 21. $axb5$ $axb5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}h4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ $\mathbb{E}xe5$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $b4!$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}ff1$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ with reasonable chances.

21. $axb5$ $axb5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $b4$

Black's counterplay across the board gives him sufficient compensation for the material investment. A possible continuation is:

24. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}g7$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{E}xe1\uparrow$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{E}f8$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ $\mathbb{E}xf5\uparrow$

B3323) 16.a5



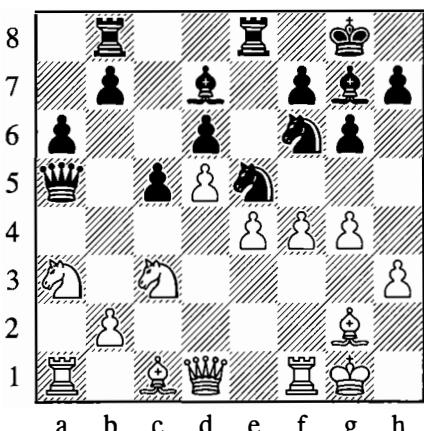
This is the most popular move, and Avrukh's recommendation. Here I would like to present two contrasting approaches for Black: B33231) 16... $\mathbb{W}xa5$ and B33232) 16...b5.

B33231) 16... $\mathbb{W}xa5$

This may lead to heavy complications.

17.g4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18.f4

18.g5 does not seem to be an improvement:
18... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ 19.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}xa1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$
 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 22.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xc3$ Black had at least equal chances in Avrukh – Kamsky, Khanty-Mansiysk 2007, and several subsequent games.



18... $\mathbb{Q}exg4!$ 19.hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$

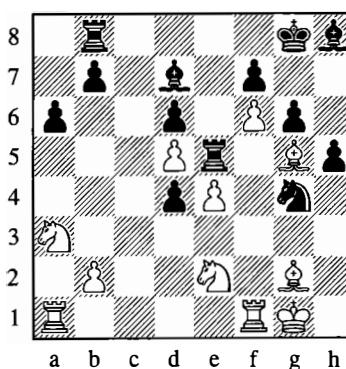
Black has three pawns for a piece, and the more reliable pawn structure. White has tried a few moves, but his only really dangerous approach is to start an attack.

20.f5! $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

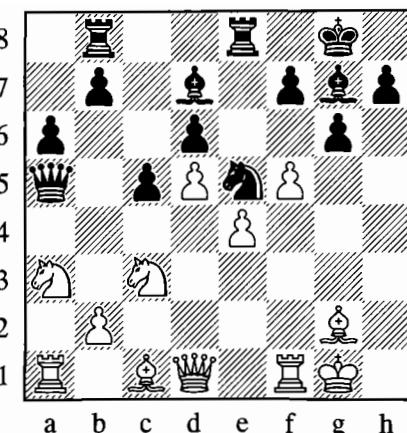
I like this move the most.

20... $\mathbb{Q}d4\text{?}!$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}f2\text{?}$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$
23. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ is dangerous for Black.

It is worth mentioning a high-level game: 20...h5? I prefer the main-line move, but this alternative is certainly playable. 21. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 22.f6 $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 23. $\mathbb{W}d2$ (Perhaps White could try to improve here; 23. $\mathbb{Q}a2\text{?}$ is one possibility.) 23... $\mathbb{W}d4\text{?}$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ cxd4 25. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$



26. $\mathbb{Q}h4?$ (26. $\mathbb{Q}f4N$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6\text{?}$) 26... $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$
 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4\text{?}$ Sasikiran – Anand, Bastia 2011.



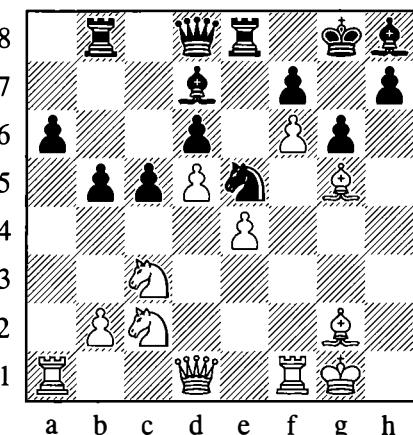
21.f6

Avrukh proposed this move, and it was later tested in a few games.

21... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ b5!

Avrukh gave the line 23...h6 24. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g5 25. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$ which indeed looks promising for White. Black has freed his dark-squared bishop, but in the process he has permanently weakened his kingside.

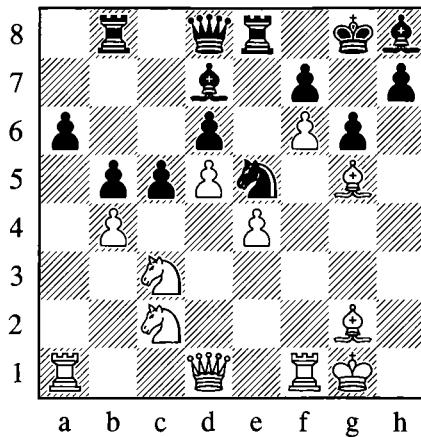
The text move is more ambitious, and just a better move all round. Black leaves his bishop buried on h8 for the time being, having confidence that a suitable opportunity will arise to free this piece later in the game. Meanwhile he sets his queenside pawns in motion and challenges White to find a good plan.

**24.b4!?**

White needs to do something about the queenside pawn roller. The following two examples highlight the need for an improvement.

24. $\mathbb{Q}e3\text{?}$ b4 25. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ h6 26. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ (26. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ also favours Black.) 26...a5 27. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ c4 28. $\mathbb{W}d2$ a4 Black was in full control and White already felt compelled to resign in Claridge – Catt, corr. 2010.

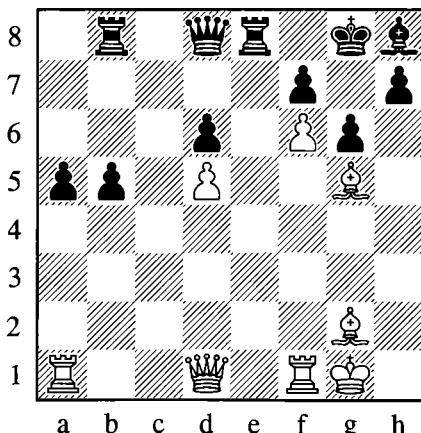
24. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ b4 25. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}a1$ $\mathbb{Q}a8$ was also promising for Black in Mareco – Flores, Moron 2012.

**24...cxb4**

24... $\mathbb{W}b6\text{?}$ also looks playable, but I like the text move. The following sequence is not completely forced, but I believe it represents best play on both sides.

25. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ a5 26. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 27.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 29.exd5

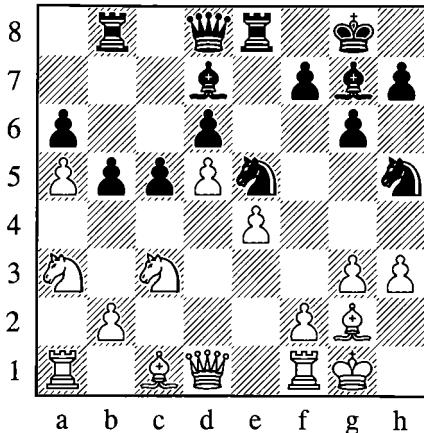
Black has four pawns for a piece, but for the time being the bishop on h8 is incarcerated. Still, Black will always have ways to free it, for instance by playing ...h6 or ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ at the right moment. The continuation might be:



29... $\mathbb{W}b6\#$ 30. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $b4$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $b3$

It is hard to give a definitive evaluation, but I would say Black is, at the very least, not worse. It is not easy for White to restrain the queenside pawns while also keeping the f6-pawn secure.

B33232) 16... $b5$



This move leads to somewhat more simplified positions, although both players will need to continue playing accurately.

17. $a xb6$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$

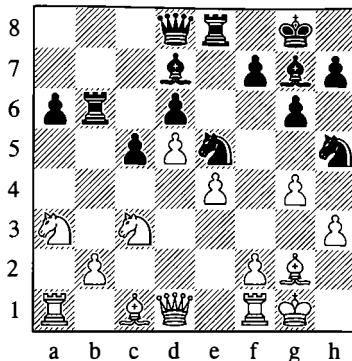
Black offers a pawn in the spirit of the Benko Gambit. In return he will obtain pressure along the b-file plus the use of the d7-square for his knights.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xb6!$?

This is a playable alternative, especially if Black is happy with a draw.

18. $g4$

18. $f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 20. $fxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ occurred in Dziuba – Iordachescu, Bratto 2010, and here I suggest 21... $\mathbb{W}h4\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $cxb4$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ when Black's attack fully compensates for the material deficit.

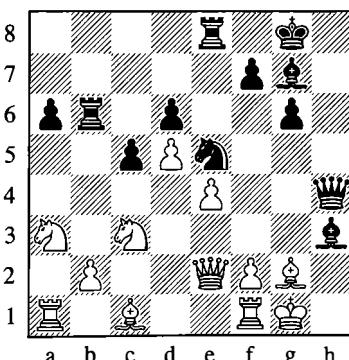


18... $\mathbb{W}h4!$ 19. $gxh5$

19. $\mathbb{Q}e1?$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 20. $hxg4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}h2$
Payen – Sanglan, Avoine 2004. 21... $\mathbb{Q}d4N-$ 21... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ 20. $hxg6$

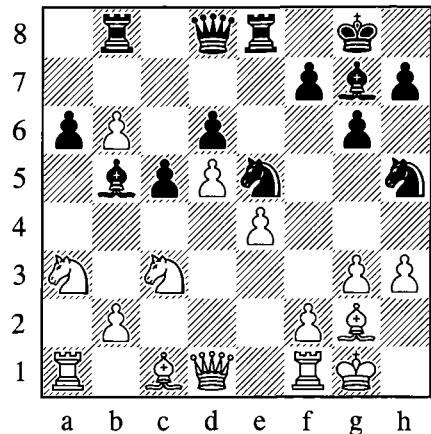
If White wishes to keep the game going then the critical continuation is: 20. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ (Black cannot proceed as in the main line below, as there will be no queen check on h6. 20... $f5$? could be considered though.) 21. $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ (23. $\mathbb{Q}d1?$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 24. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf2$!+) 23... $\mathbb{Q}xf2$! 24. $\mathbb{W}xf2$ $\mathbb{Q}g3$ 25. $\mathbb{W}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2!$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2\#$ 28. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ My machine thinks Black should be okay in this endgame, but plenty of play remains.

20... $hxg6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e2$



21... $\mathbb{Q}xb2!!$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{W}g5\#$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{W}h6\#$

Let's return to the main line.



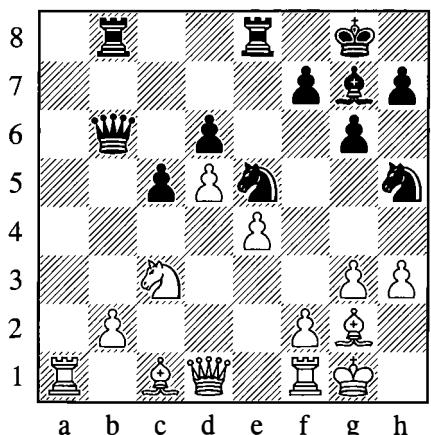
18. $\mathbb{Q}axb5$

If White goes 18. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ then Black can safely play 18... $\mathbb{W}xb6$, since 19. f4? runs into 19... $\mathbb{Q}d3$, and 19. $\mathbb{Q}axb5$ axb5 20. f4? also allows 20... $\mathbb{Q}d3$!.

18... $\mathbb{a}xb5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{W}xb6$

From here White has tried both possible knight retreats: B332321) 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ and B332322) 20. $\mathbb{Q}a3$.

B332321) 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

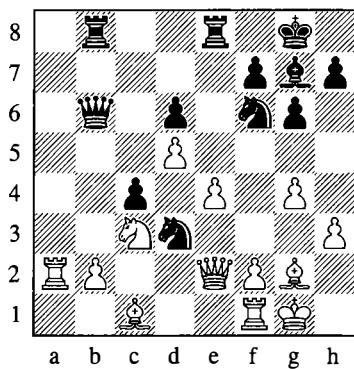


20... $\mathbb{Q}c4$

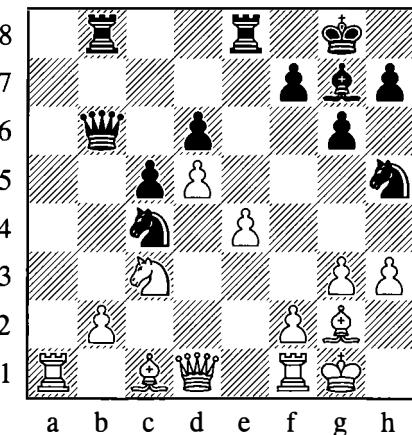
This move is active, although Black should take care as the knight could be a little bit unstable here. The alternatives are worth checking:

Compared with line B332322 below, White's knight on c3 supports e4 and blocks the long diagonal, therefore 20... $\mathbb{W}b3$ no longer seems quite so purposeful. Nevertheless I suspect it's still fully playable, with, for example, 21. g4!? $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. f4 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 23. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ $\mathbb{E}xb3$ 24. $\mathbb{E}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ giving Black continued queenside pressure.

20... $\mathbb{c}4$? seems like a valid alternative, with the idea of planting the knight on d3 where it dominates the centre. 21. g4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22. $\mathbb{E}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 23. $\mathbb{W}e2$



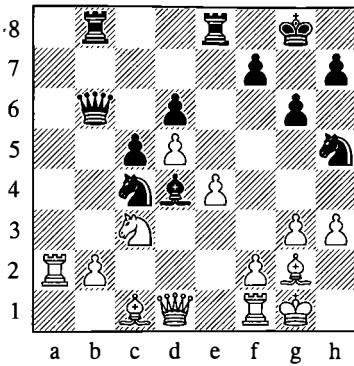
23... $\mathbb{Q}d7$! Skrbin – Saric, Pula 2011.



21. $\mathbb{W}e2$

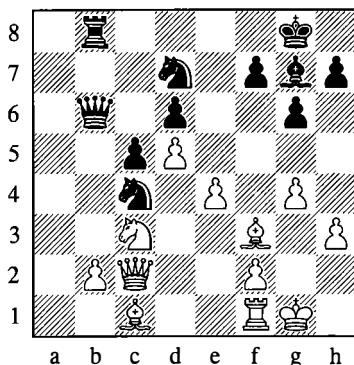
Against 21. $\mathbb{E}a2$ Black has a nice improvement in 21... $\mathbb{Q}d4$! ensuring that the bishop stays active. (Instead after 21... $\mathbb{W}b3$ 22. g4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$! $\mathbb{W}xd1$ 24. $\mathbb{E}xd1$ $\mathbb{E}b4$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ White

was able to swap off his bad bishop and had chances to be better in Lemos – Mayorga, Asuncion 2011.)

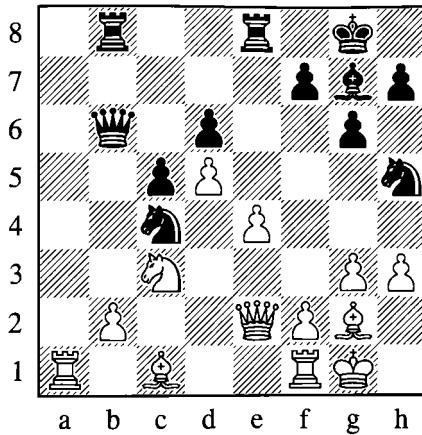


The value of Black's last move can be seen after 22.g4?N $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ when the bishop is strong on d4. Black has pressure against the e4-pawn and keeps the ...Wb3 idea in reserve. Another possible plan is exchanging off the useful defensive rook with ...Wa8.

I also decided to analyse the untested but fairly logical move: 21.g4?N $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ (21... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 22.Wf3 Wb3 23.Qa7 Qf8 24.Qa4 Qxa4 25.Qxb3 Qxb3 26.Qxa4 Qf6 27.Qa6±) 22.Qa2 Qa8 23.Qc2 Qd7 24.Qxa8 Qxa8 25.Qf3 Qb8 Finally Black is poised to capture the b-pawn.



26.Qe2 Qxb2 27.Qb5 c4 28.Qxb2 Wxb5 29.Qxg7 Qxg7 30.Qxc4 Wb4= Black's active pieces provide ongoing compensation for the pawn.



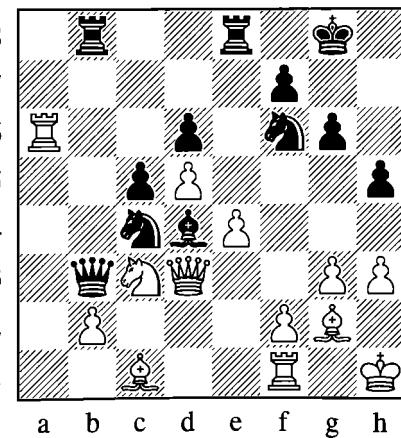
21...Wb3

Black has good compensation here, and can even fight for the advantage.

22.Qa6 Qd4 23.Qh1 Qf6 24.Wd3 h5!

A nice touch, preparing to soften up the white kingside.

Black might have hurried, but after 24...Qxb2 25.Qxb2 Wxb2 26.Qd1 Wb3 27.Qxb3 Qxb3 28.Qxd6 Qxe4 29.Qxe4 Qxe4 White would have had good chances to draw the resulting rook endgame with 30.Qd8† Qg7 31.d6 Qe6 32.Qe3 Qxe3 33.fxe3 Qbxe3 34.Qd1!.



25.Wd1?

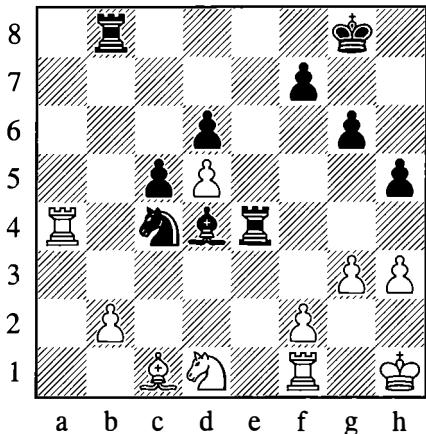
It is always tempting to exchange pieces while under pressure, especially when one is lacking

an obvious move. Unfortunately for White, his chosen move loses a more important pawn than the weakling on b2.

A better attempt was 25.f4?! h4 26.g4 ♖xb2 27.♖xb2 ♕xb2 28.♕d1 when White's kingside looks rather overextended, but at least this way he would have been able to complicate the struggle. Overall I would evaluate Black's chances as only slightly better here.

25...♘xd1 26.♕xd1 ♘xe4 27.♕xe4 ♜xe4 28.♗a4

Indirectly defending b2, but with the e4-pawn already having fallen, Black has a more attractive target.



28...♗b6! 29.♗c3 ♜e5

White's position has become distinctly unappetizing. Such a scenario is far from unknown in Benko-type positions, in which Black restores the material balance while maintaining pressure against other weaknesses.

30.♗a7 ♘xd5 31.♗d7 ♜xc3 32.bxc3 ♜e6 33.c4

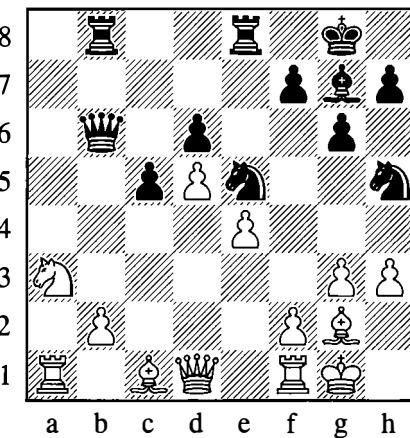
The c-pawn will fall after this. I dare say that the dark-squared bishop would have liked to have moved at some point, but here 33.♗d2 ♜b2 34.♗d1 ♜f6 35.♗d8† ♜g7 followed by some combination of ...♜c2, ...♜e2 and ...♝e4

would have left Black with an overwhelming initiative.

33...♗b6

White resigned in Sturt – Berg, Helsingør 2011.

B332322) 20.♗a3



20...♘b3!

This move was not mentioned by Avrukh, and to be fair it had not been played at the time his book was published! In the last few years it has been played several times at GM level and is currently considered the critical path of the 16...b5 line.

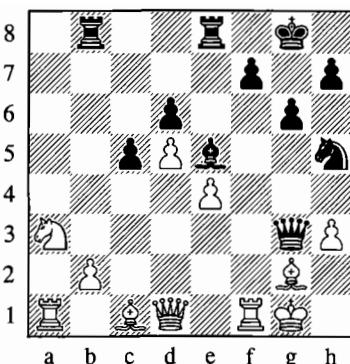
It's important to realize that, just as in the previous line, the present position is essentially a Benko Gambit. As is often the case in that opening, Black should not fear the exchange of queens as his compensation will persist and quite possibly grow in an endgame. The text move also has the benefit of controlling the third rank.

By the way, it is worth pointing out that 20...c4?! is premature: 21.♗h2! ♜c5 22.♗e3 ♜b4 23.♗c2 ♜xb2 24.♗a6 ♜ed8 25.♗d4 c3 26.♗c6 c2 27.♗c1 ♜xc6 28.♗xc6± Anastasian – Gopal, Abu Dhabi 2007.

21.♕h2

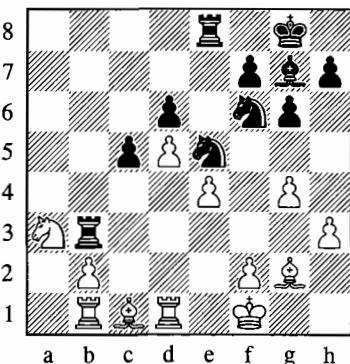
White has several other candidates here.

- a) 21.♗e2?!N ♖d3 is good for Black.
- b) 21.f4? ♗xg3! 22.fxе5 ♗xe5 shows that the position might quickly return to Benoni waters, with White in huge trouble here:



23.♗f3 ♗h2† 24.♔f1 ♗d4 25.♔e3 ♗xb2
26.♖c2 ♗f4!+–

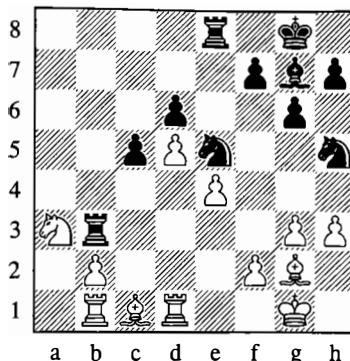
- c) 21.g4 ♗f6 22.♗b1 ♗xd1 23.♗xd1 ♗b3!
24.♔f1 Sasikiran – Battaglini, Bastia 2011.
(24.♔d2 ♗fd7 25.♔c3 g5!)



24...♗eb8N 25.♗a1 h5 26.g5 ♗fd7– Intending ...♖d3 or ...♗b6 with good play.

- d) 21.♗b1 ♗xd1 22.♗xd1 ♗b3

Not only blocking the b-pawn, but also exerting pressure on the third rank.

**23.♗d2**

The last point can be highlighted by 23.♗e3? ♗xg3!–.

23...♗a8 24.g4 ♗f6 25.♔c3 ♗xc3 26.bxc3 ♗xa3 27.f4 ♗c4

27...♗ed7 28.♗b7 ♗xc3 also leads to a draw: 29.g5 ♗h5 30.♗xd7 ♗d4† 31.♔h1 ♗e3 32.♗xd6 ♗g3† 33.♔h2 ♗xf4 34.♗d8† ♗g7=

28.e5!

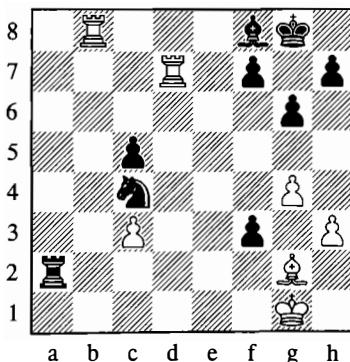
This saves the day for White.

28...dxe5 29.d6 exf4?N

29...♗a7 led to a draw in Le Quang – Giri, Beijing 2011.

30.♗b8† ♗f8 31.d7 ♗xd7 32.♗xd7 ♗a1† 33.♔f2 ♗a2† 34.♔g1 f3

Unfortunately this is not quite winning.

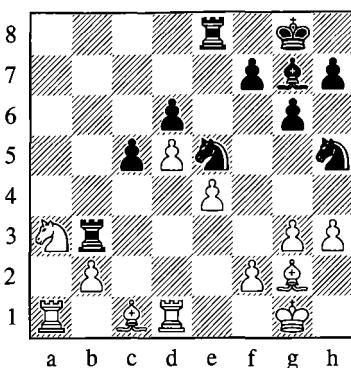


35.♗xf3 ♗e5 36.♗dd8 ♗xf3† 37.♔f1 ♗g7
38.♗xf8 ♗d2=

Black is poised to deliver perpetual check with the knight.

e) 21.♗xb3 ♗xb3 22.♗d1

We have reached the same position as the main line, but the king is on g1.



22...♘f6!

The knight embarks on a long journey. This is better than 22...♗eb8 23.♗f1 f5 24.exf5 gxf5 25.♗a2 ♗f8 26.♗g1 ♗a8 27.♗f1 c4 28.♗g2 ♘d3 29.♗xc4 ♗xa2 30.♗xd3 ♗b4 31.♗xd6 ♗xb2 32.♗d2 f4 33.♗e2 ♘f6 34.gxf4 ♘xd5 35.♗c4 ♗xc1 36.♗xd5† 1–0

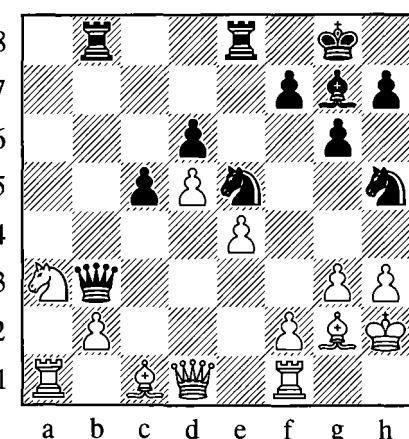
Sasikiran – Arnold, Bastia 2011.

23.♗d2 ♘fd7 24.♗c3 ♘b6 25.♗ac1 ♘ed7 26.♗xg7 ♗xg7 27.♗d2 ♗a8 28.♗f1 ♘e5

Black's moves are natural and easy to find.

29.♗g2 ♗a4 30.f4 ♘f3=

Malikentzov – Grigorov, Plovdiv 2012.



21...♗xd1 22.♗xd1 ♗b3

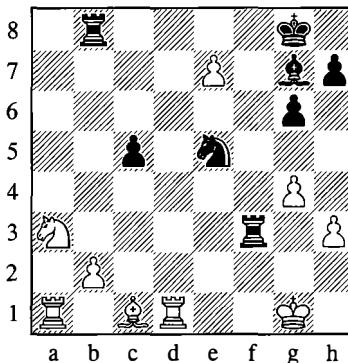
Black has good compensation here too.

23.g4

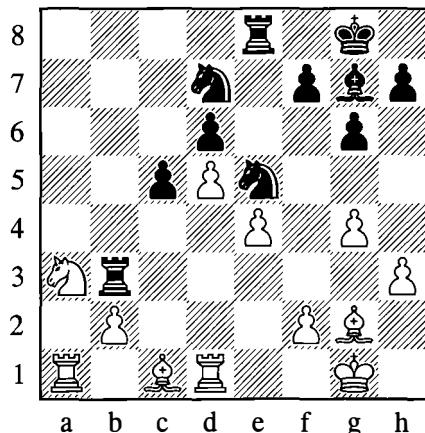
Preventing ...f5.

23...♘f6 24.♗g1 ♘fd7

I found an amusing draw in the following line: 24...♗eb8!!N 25.f4 ♘f3† 26.♗xf3 ♗xf3 27.e5 dxe5 28.fxe5 ♘d7 29.e6 fxe6 30.dxe6 ♘e5 31.e7



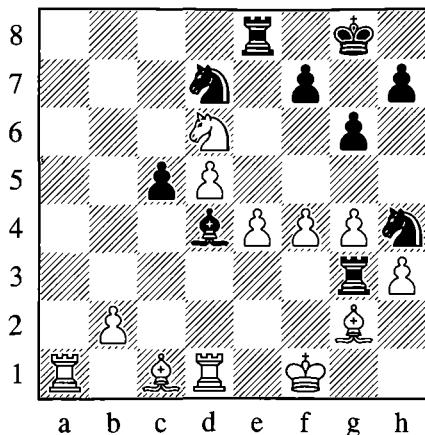
31...♘f6 32.♗g2 ♗h4! The bishop has found a way towards the white king. 33.♗d8† ♘g7 34.e8=♘†? ♗h8 35.♗xb8 ♗f2† 36.♗h1 ♗f1† 37.♗g2 ♗f2†=



25.f4 ♘f3† 26.♗f2

26.♗xf3 looks risky, as after 26...♗xf3 27.♗c4 ♗xe4 28.♗a8† ♗f8 29.♗xd6 ♗e2∞ the black rooks are extremely active.

26...♘h4 27.♗c4 ♗d4† 28.♗f1 ♗g3 29.♗xd6



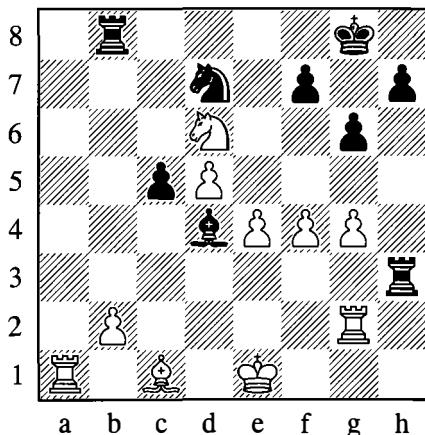
29...♝b8!N

This improvement leads to an excellent position.

29...♝xg2?? 30.♝xd4+– Grischuk – Vocaturo, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010.

30.♝d2 ♛xg2 31.♝xg2 ♜xh3 32.♝e1

Now we will make way for the knight.



32...c4!↑

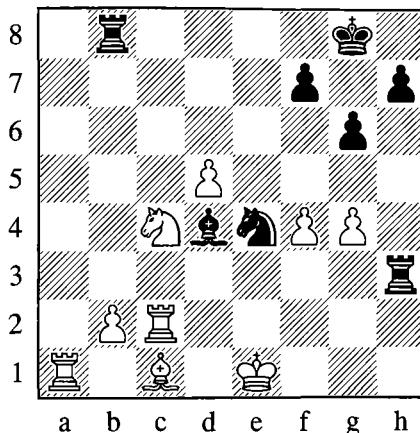
Black is doing fine, as shown by the following illustrative lines.

33.♛xc4 ♛c5 34.♝c2

34.♝a3?! ♜h1† 35.♝d2 ♜b4 36.♝e3
(36.♝d6? ♜xb2–+) 36...♝b3† 37.♝xb3 ♜xb3
38.♝d1 ♜b4†

34...♝xe4

34...♝h1† 35.♝e2 ♜h2†=



35.♝f1 ♜f3† 36.♝e2 ♜g3=

Conclusion

The Fianchetto System presents a good challenge but it seems to me that Black can obtain an active and promising game in all the major variations. Avrukh's recommendation deserves especially close attention, but we have seen that Black has the relative luxury of being able to choose between two quite satisfactory options on move 16.

Chapter 18

Lines without e4

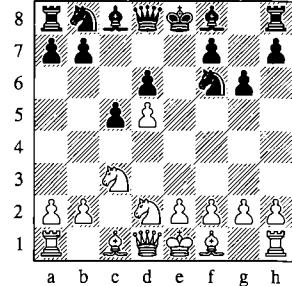
Knight's Tour Variation

Variation Index

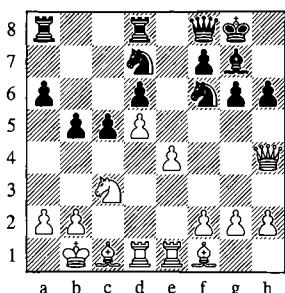
1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

6...g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

A) 7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7??$	249
B) 7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 0–0	250
B1) 9.g3	251
B2) 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$	252
B3) 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$	253
B31) 9...b6	253
B32) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$	257

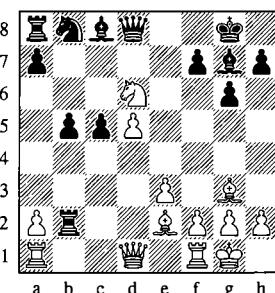


B2) after 19. $\mathbb{Q}c1$



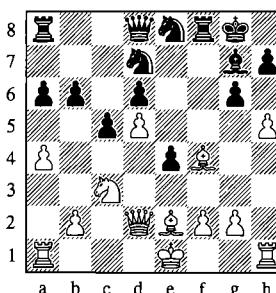
19...c4!N

B3 1) note to 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$



16...c4?N

B32) note to 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



17... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!?$ N

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5
d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

In this variation we see the white knight making an early journey from g1-f3-d2-c4, hence the name "Knight's Tour". The main reason for executing this manoeuvre so early in the game is to attack the d6-pawn, with the help of ♜f4 and perhaps even ♜b5. This all takes time of course, and we will see some lines where Black just abandons the d6-pawn in search of the initiative.

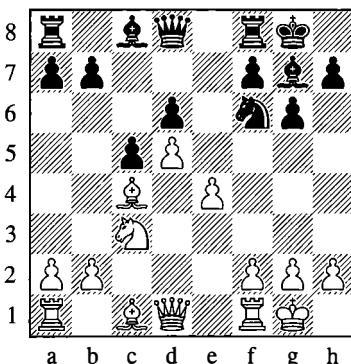
We will consider A) 7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7!!$ followed by the main line of B) 7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$.

A) 7... ♟ bd7!!?

Black has the simple idea of countering White's manoeuvre with a knight tour of his own.

8.e4

8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ allows Black to implement his plan and achieve almost instant equality: 8... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 9.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 11.0-0-0-0

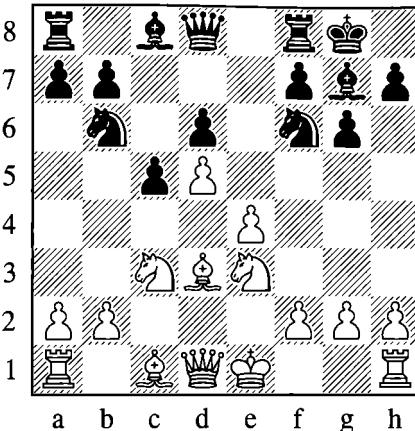


12.♕g5 a6 13.a4 h6 14.♕h4 ♜e8= Ramakrishna – Rathnakaran, Mumbai 2008.

8...♝g7 9.♞c4

White's play makes more sense than in the previous note, as now the knight can drop back and avoid being exchanged without blocking the e-pawn. Obviously he could also head for the Classical Variation with 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$.

9...Qb6 10.Qe3 0-0 11.Qd3



11... ♗h5!?

The knights on e3 and b6 are already sitting a little strangely, and now a third knight embarks on a journey.

Black can also develop normally with:

11...e8

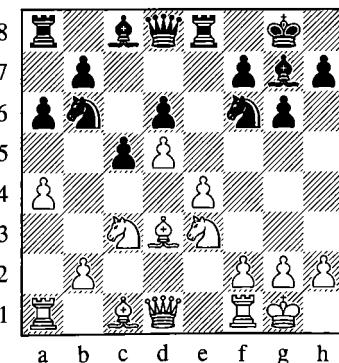
This has been the most popular move. Here are some illustrative lines:

12.0-0 a6

12...c4 13.Qc2 Qd7 14.a4 a5 15.f4 Qc7

16. $\mathbb{W}f3 \mathbb{W}c5$ = Bastos – C. Jones, e-mail 2003.

13.a4



13... ♘bd7

The knight is ready to take another route.

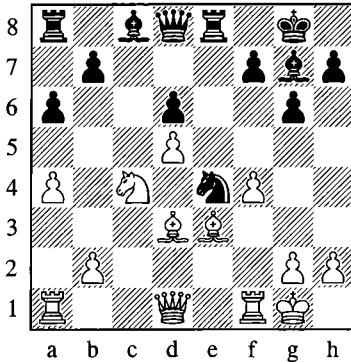
Another option is: 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (14.a5 $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$) Tarjan – Rohde,

Lone Pine 1978. 16... $\mathbb{b}6N=$) 14... $c4$ 15. $\mathbb{b}c2$
 $\mathbb{w}c7$ 16. $\mathbb{w}e2$ $a5$ 17. $f4$ $\mathbb{w}c5$ 18. $\mathbb{b}h1$ $\mathbb{b}e7$
19. $\mathbb{w}f3$ $\mathbb{b}ae8\rightleftarrows$ Jankovic – Gashimov,
Kusadasi 2006.

14. $f4$

Preventing ... $\mathbb{d}e5$, but Black is ready with a typical pseudo-sacrifice.

14... $c4!$ 15. $\mathbb{d}xc4$ $\mathbb{d}c5$ 16. $\mathbb{b}e3$ $\mathbb{d}fxe4$ 17. $\mathbb{d}xe4$

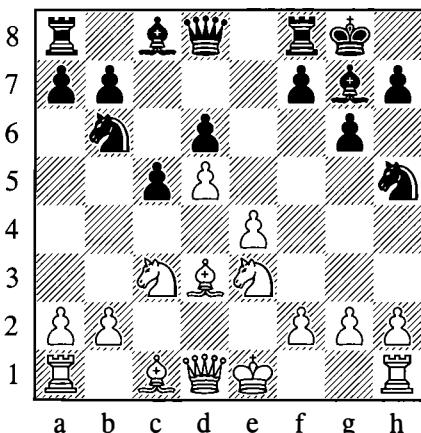


18. $\mathbb{b}b6$ $\mathbb{w}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{b}e1$ $\mathbb{b}f5$ 20. $\mathbb{w}c2$

20. $g4$ $\mathbb{d}c5\rightleftarrows$

20... $\mathbb{b}e7$ 21. $\mathbb{b}ac1$ $\mathbb{b}ae8=$

Meister – Bromann Manthey, e-mail 2008.



12.0–0 $\mathbb{d}f4$

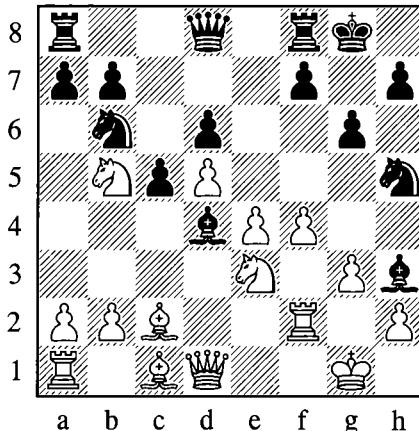
Here is an old example to illustrate the Modern Benoni's long history: 12... $\mathbb{b}e5$ 13. $a4$ $\mathbb{d}f4$ 14. $a5$ $\mathbb{d}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{d}c4$ $\mathbb{d}xd3$ 16. $\mathbb{w}xd3\pm$ Nimzowitsch – Marshall, New York 1927.

13. $\mathbb{b}c2$ $\mathbb{b}e5$

13... $\mathbb{b}e8$ 14. $\mathbb{w}f3$ $\mathbb{b}e5$ 15. $a4$ $a5$ 16. $\mathbb{d}b5\pm$

14. $g3$ $\mathbb{d}h5$ 15. $f4$ $\mathbb{d}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{d}b5$ $\mathbb{b}h3$ 17. $\mathbb{b}f2$

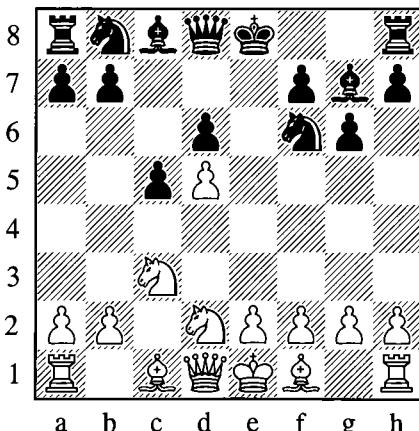
17. $\mathbb{d}xd4!?$ N $\mathbb{b}xf1$ 18. $\mathbb{d}xf1$ $cxd4$ 19. $\mathbb{w}xd4$
 $\mathbb{w}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{w}b4\rightleftarrows$



17... $\mathbb{b}xe3!$ 18. $\mathbb{b}xe3$ $\mathbb{d}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{b}c1$ $\mathbb{d}g4\rightleftarrows$

Black's kingside activity was enough to compensate for the loss of the dark-squared bishop in Postny – Holst, Helsingør 2009.

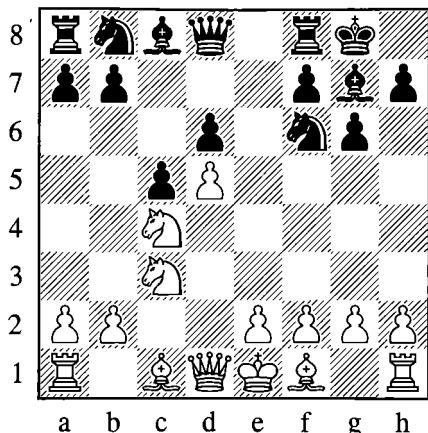
B) 7... $\mathbb{b}g7$



This is the most obvious and popular move. Black does not go out of his way to fight against the knight coming to c4, and is willing to give up the d6-pawn if necessary.

8.♘c4

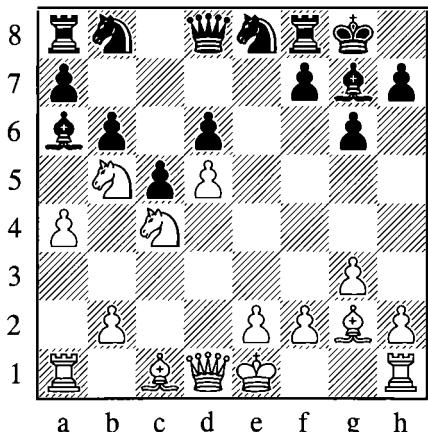
8.e4 0–0 9.♗e2 leads to Chapter 7.

8...0–0

Now it is worth considering three main options: **B1) 9.g3**, **B2) 9.♗g5** and **B3) 9.♗f4**.

B1) 9.g3 b6

Black immediately goes after White's prized knight.

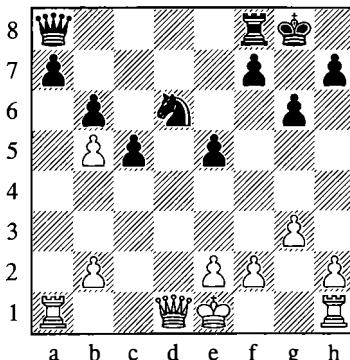
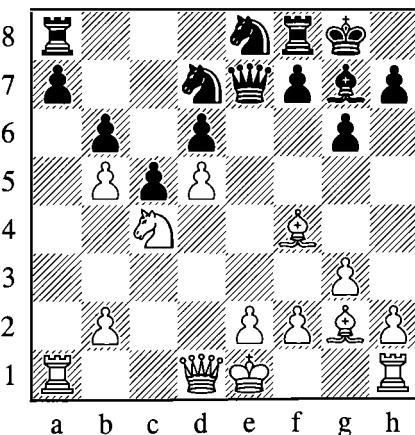
10.a4 ♘a6 11.♗b5 ♘e8 12.♗g2**12...♗xb5**

This may seem anti-positional, but Black needs to eliminate at least one of the trouble-

some knights. We will see that there may be chances to fight back on the queenside later with a timely ...a6.

13.axb5 ♘d7 14.♗f4 ♗e7

14...♘e5?!N has not been tested but seems playable, for instance: 15.♗xe5 ♘xe5 16.♗xe5 (16.0–0 ♘g7=) 16...dxe5 17.d6 ♘xd6 18.♗xa8 ♗xa8

**19.0–0 ♘xb5 20.e3 ♗c6=****15.0–0**

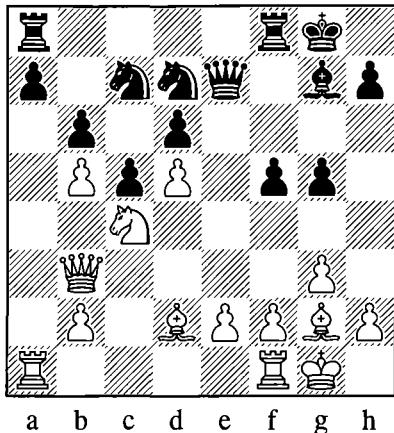
Another game continued 15.♗d2 ♘e5 16.♗e3 ♘d8 17.0–0 ♘d7 18.♗xe5 ♘xe5 19.♗a4 f5 20.♗fa1 ♘f7 21.♗d2 ♘g7 22.♗1a3 ♘d4 ½–½ Postny – Mecking, Lodi 2006.

15...g5

15...♗e5?! 16.♗xe5 ♘xe5 17.♗xb6 ♘b8

18. $\mathbb{Q}c4 \mathbb{B}xb5$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c2\pm$ Rodshtein – Romanov, Yerevan 2006.

16. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}b3 f5$



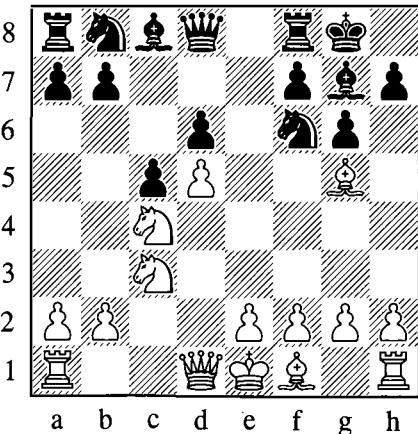
18. $\mathbb{B}ae1?!$

18. $f4N$ is more critical. Then 18. $gxf4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ favours White, but 18... $a6!?$ 19. $bxa6$ $b5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}a5 \mathbb{W}xe2$ leads to highly unclear play.

18... $f4$ 19. $gxf4$ $gxf4$

With the knight coming to e5 next Black had the initiative in Ivanchuk – Topalov, Novgorod 1995.

B2) 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



Why is the bishop going to g5 instead of f4, where it would attack the d6-pawn? The answer is that White wants to bring his queen to f4, where it will hit d6 while also establishing a bind over the kingside.

9... $\mathbb{W}e7!$

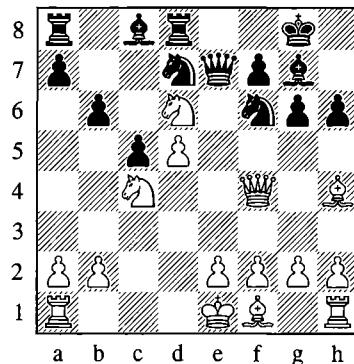
9... $h6!?$ has been the most popular move, but I don't like it. 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{B}e8$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c1 g5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ Black's position is slightly unpleasant due to the constant presence of h2-h4 ideas, for example: 12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 13. $a4 \mathbb{Q}ba6$ 14. $h4 f6$ 15. $e4\pm$ Portisch – Spassky, Turin 1982.

10. $\mathbb{W}d2 b6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}f4 \mathbb{B}d8$

The rook looks a little peculiar here, but White's pieces are also rather oddly placed.

12.0–0–0

12. $\mathbb{Q}e4!?$ is too risky for White. There can follow: 12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}exd6 h6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$



14... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ (14... $g5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f5 \mathbb{W}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg5 hxg5$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xg5 b5\infty$ is not bad but the text move seems even stronger.) 15. $\mathbb{W}e3 \mathbb{W}xe3$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe3 \mathbb{Q}f8\mp$

12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 13. $e4 \mathbb{Q}xc4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4 a6$

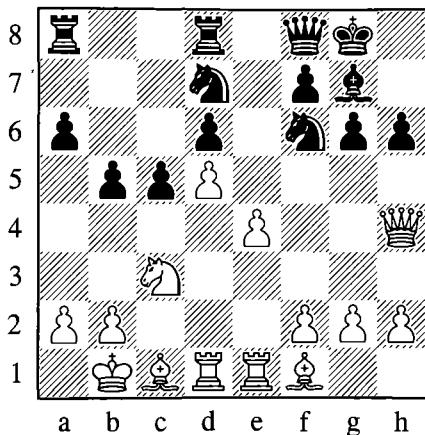
Black has solved his opening problems and can complete his development in a straightforward fashion.

15. $\mathbb{W}h4 \mathbb{Q}bd7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}he1 \mathbb{W}f8$

The white bishops will soon be pushed back.

17.♔b1 b5 18.♕f1 h6 19.♕c1

Portisch – Horvath, Hungary 1984.



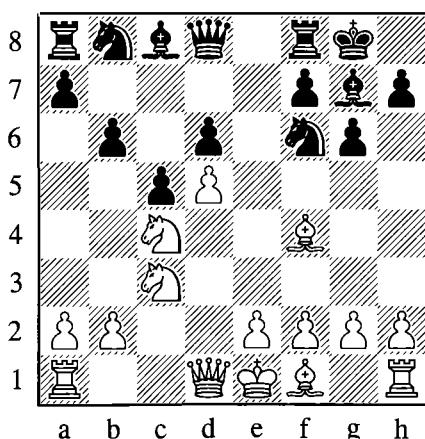
19...c4!N

Black’s queenside initiative gives him the better chances.

B3) 9.♕f4

Attacking the d6-pawn is White’s main plan. Now Black has an adventurous option in B31) 9...b6 and a more solid alternative in B32) 9...♘e8.

B31) 9...b6



With this move Black invites his opponent to go along a path to massive complications.

10.♗xd6

10.e3?

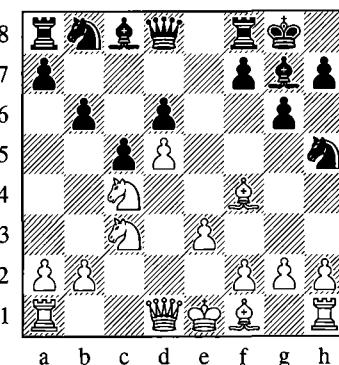
This modest move is actually rather challenging, as it invites a transposition to the 9...♘e8 variation that Black has just tried to avoid.

10...♘h5?N

If you are determined to obtain a complicated position you could try this aggressive move. I do not trust it completely, but in a practical game it could prove quite tricky.

For 10...♘e8 11.♗d2, see 9...♘e8 10.♗d2 b6 11.e3 on page 259.

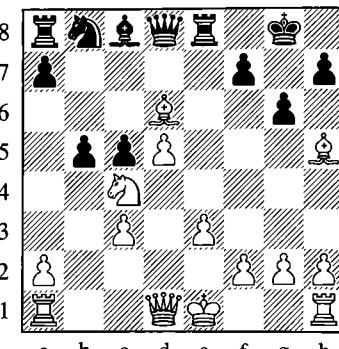
10...♗a6?! does not work: 11.♗xd6 ♗e8 12.♗g3 ♘e4 13.♗xe4 ♗xe4 14.♗c2 ♗xd5 15.♗d1 ♗c6 Dmitrenko – Arutyunova, Simferopol 2003. 16.♗e2N±



11.♗xd6 ♗xc3† 12.bxc3 ♗e8 13.♗e2

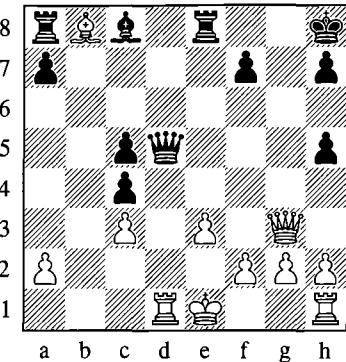
Now Black has to play energetically to stay in the fight.

13...b5! 14.♗xh5

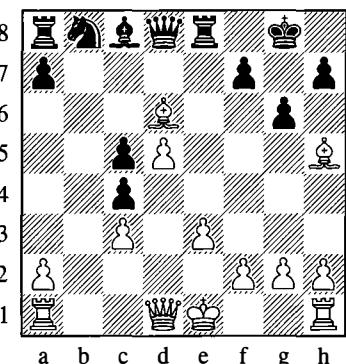


14...bxc4

14...gxh5?! is interesting, but does not quite work against accurate play: 15.♗f3 bxc4 16.♗g3† ♖h8 17.♕xb8 ♕xd5 18.♖d1



18...♕xd1† (18...♕e4 19.♔f4 f6 20.0–0 ♔g8 21.f3 ♕c2 22.♗f2 ♕xc3 23.♔h1±) 19.♔xd1 ♕xb8 20.♔e1! (20.♔d2 ♕b2† 21.♔c1 ♕xa2 22.♔b1 ♕a6=) 20...♔f5 21.e4 ♕xe4 22.f3 ♕b1† 23.♔d2 ♕b2† 24.♔e3 ♕d3† 25.♔f4±



15.♔xb8 ♕xb8 16.♔e2 ♕e5

Another idea is 16...♕g5?! 17.0–0 ♔h3 18.♔f3 ♔f5 19.♔e1 ♕d3 20.♕a4 ♕e7, when the strong bishop on d3 gives Black some compensation, although objectively White must still be better.

17.0–0

After 17.♕xc4 ♕xe3†! 18.fxe3 ♕h4† 19.g3 ♕xc4 20.♕d2 ♔h3= Black has good play for the exchange.

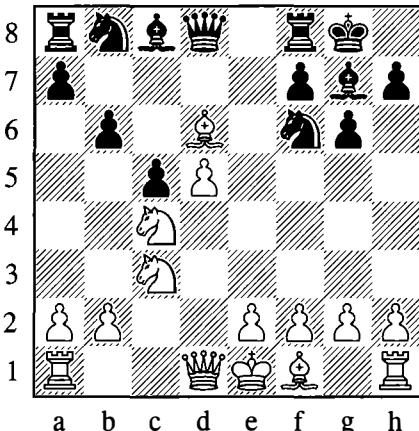
17...♕xd5

17...♔b7 18.♔xc4 ♔xd5 19.♕e2 leaves Black a pawn down for not much.

18.♕a4 ♔f5 19.♔xc4 ♕d7! 20.♕xd7 ♕xd7

Black is still a pawn down, but is poised to invade with his rook on b2, and thus has good chances to hold the endgame.

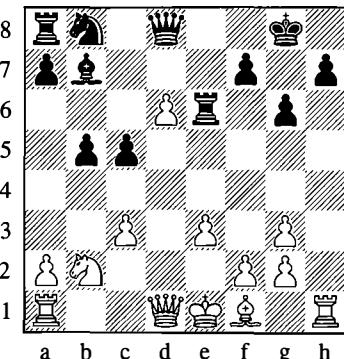
Let's return to the main line.



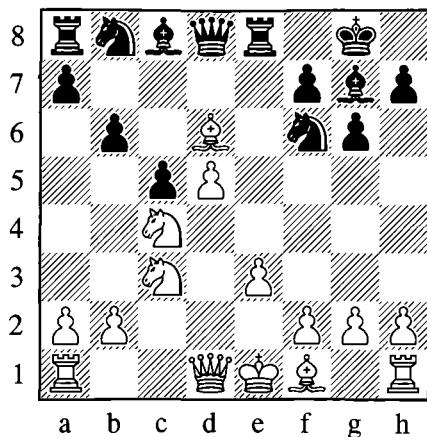
10...♕e8 11.e3!

An important nuance in the move order.

The more common 11.♔g3 appears to be a slight inaccuracy due to the following untested idea: 11...♗h5!N Exchanging the important bishop. (All games have continued 11...♗e4 12.♕xe4 ♕xe4 13.e3 reaching the main line below.) 12.e3 ♗xg3 13.hxg3 ♕xc3† 14.bxc3 ♔b7 15.d6 b5 16.♔b2 ♕e6†



Black has a promising position, for example:
17.♗b3 a6 18.a4 ♗d7†

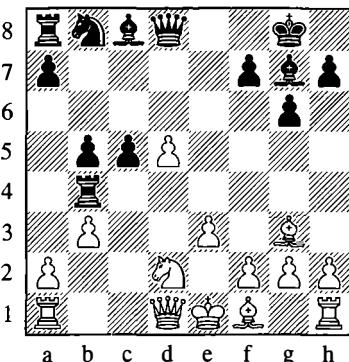


11...♘e4

Thanks to White’s accurate move order there is no way to implement the ...♘h5 idea, so Black may as well transpose to the main path.

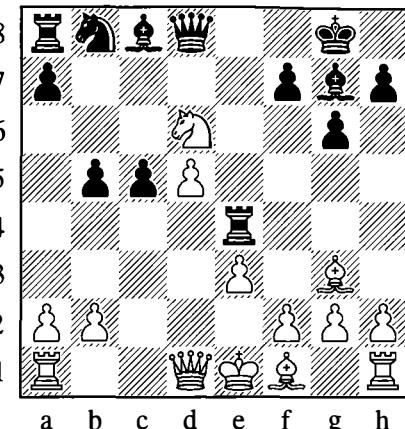
12.♘xe4 ♕xe4 13.♗g3 b5 14.♘d6

The alternative is 14.♘d2 ♕b4 15.b3 when the critical continuation seems to be:



15...♗xa1!? This has only been played in one game so far. (15...c4 has been the usual choice. It leads to interesting play but I do not fully trust it.) 16.♕xa1 Now I would like to improve on the game Reeh – Wallinger, Germany 1991, by recommending 16...♗xd5N. The rook on b4 is in danger and the dark squares in our camp are exposed, but on the other hand we

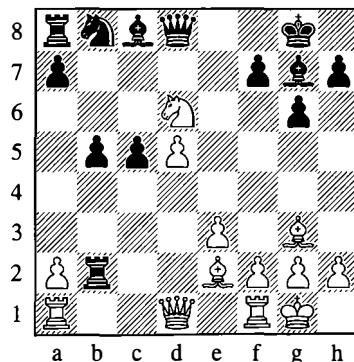
do have an extra exchange, and it will take some time for White to create an attack. A possible continuation is: 17.♗e2 ♕b7 18.♗f3 ♘d7 19.a3 ♕g4 20.♗f6 ♘c6†



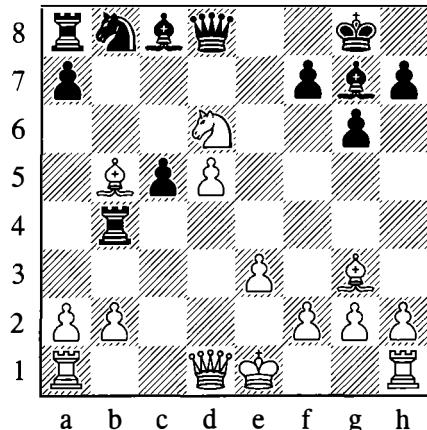
14...♕b4 15.♗xb5

Grabbing the b-pawn seems like the most ambitious choice, and leads to interesting complications.

15.♗e2?! has only been played once, but could be a serious alternative: 15...♗xb2 16.0–0



16...c4?N (16...♘a6 occurred in Garcia Ilundain – Spraggett, Ampuriabrava 1997, and now after 17.♗b1N c4 18.♗xb2 ♗xb2 19.a4 b4 20.♘xc4 Black’s compensation is questionable.) 17.a4 ♘d7 18.axb5 c3 The machine still favours White, but I would expect the strong c-pawn to be a source of at least some discomfort to most players.



15...♞f8 16.♝c6 ♞xc6N

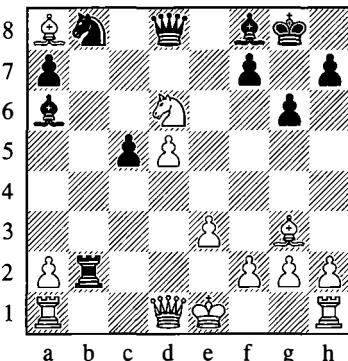
It is necessary to improve on:

16...♝a6?

This led to success for Black in two games, but White's play can easily be improved.

17.♝xa8 ♜xb2

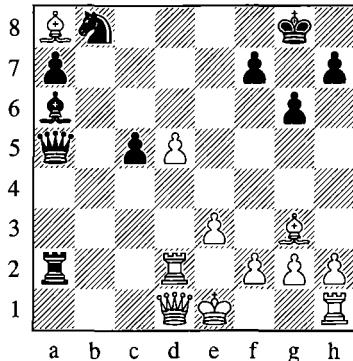
It may look as though Black has dangerous counterplay (...♝a5† being the obvious threat) but White can obtain a serious advantage with the help of some accurate moves.



18.♝e4!N

18.♝a4?? ♜f6+– 19.♜c1 ♜xd6 20.f4 ♜f5
21.e4 ♜e2† 22.♝d1 ♜h5 0–1 Donner –
Planinc, Wijk aan Zee 1973.

18...♜a5† 19.♝d2 ♜g7 20.♜c1 ♜c3 21.♜c2±
♜xd2† 22.♜xd2 ♜xa2



23.♝c7! ♜c3 24.♝e5 ♜b4 25.f4 ♜d7 26.d6
♜xe5 27.fxe5 ♜c3 28.♝f3 ♜b5 29.♝g4 ♜a1
30.♝f2 ♜xd1 31.♝hxd1 ♜xe5 32.d7 ♜f6†
33.♝g1 ♜d8 34.♝e2+–

17.dxcc6 ♜a6

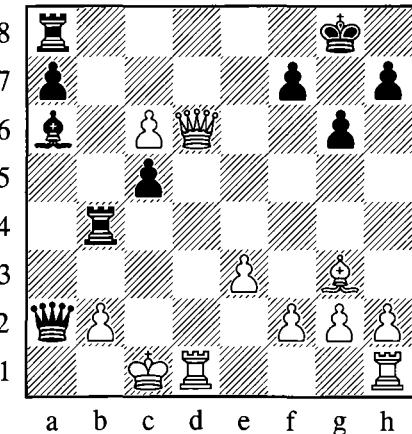
Black has good compensation here, as the white king is stuck in the centre.

18.♛d5

I also analysed: 18.♛d2 ♜g7 19.♜b1 ♜b6
20.f3 ♜xc6 21.♝f2 ♜d8 22.♜hd1 ♜f8 23.♛d5
♜xd5 24.♜xd5 ♜b6 25.♜bd1 ♜xb2†=

18...♝xd6 19.♛xd6 ♜a5 20.0–0–0 ♜xa2?

Black can force a draw immediately:
20...♜xb2 21.♝xb2 ♜b4† 22.♝c2 ♜c4†=



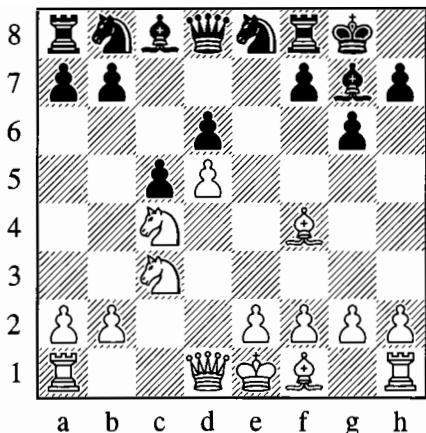
21.♝e5!

Now Black really must take the draw.

21... $\mathbb{Q}c4\#$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3\#$ 23. $bxc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$
24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a1\#$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{W}a2\#$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}c1=$

So the main line ended peacefully, but we saw there were many possible deviations along the way. The next option is much calmer.

B32) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

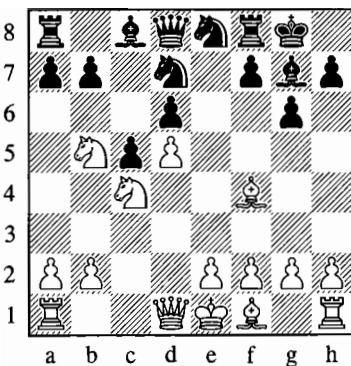


10. $\mathbb{W}d2$

This is the main line. Several other moves have been tested, but none of them pose much of a threat.

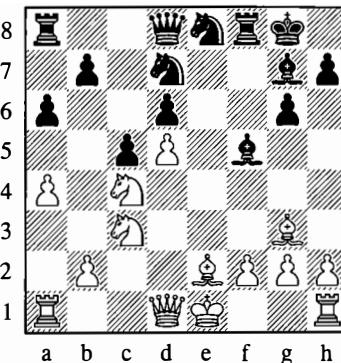
The first point worth mentioning is that going after the d6-pawn is a road to misery for White: 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ b5 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ g5 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2\#$ Sadauskas – Bianchi, corr. 1989.

It is a similar story after 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5$. Now in Van Rensburg – Solomon, Cape Town 2007, Black should have played 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$, for instance:



11. $\mathbb{Q}bx d6?$ White should avoid this move, but then what was the point of putting the knight on b5? 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 15. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}f6\#$

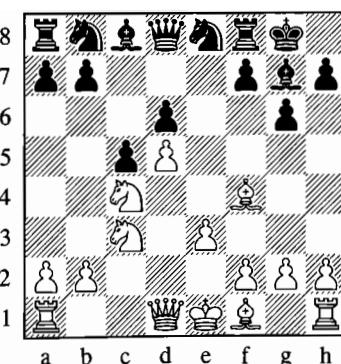
What about moving the e-pawn? 10.e4 allows immediate counterplay with: 10...f5! 11.exf5 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ a6 13.a4 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



This position was reached in Kopsa – Moettonen, Finland 1987, and here I recommend 14... $\mathbb{Q}d4\#N$ 15.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ with equal chances.

The last of White's noteworthy alternatives is: 10.e3

Compared with the main line this gives Black a few extra options.



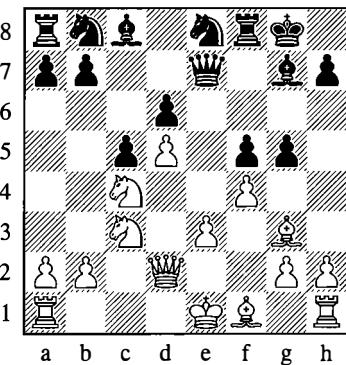
10...g5!?

It is hard to say if this aggressive move is really the best, but it is certainly tempting.

10...b6 can be compared with the main line, and may transpose after a subsequent $\mathbb{W}d2$. Another good option is 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ which leads to a solid position: 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac7$ 12.a4 b6 13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ f5 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ (15. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ Burkart – Auer, Germany 2008. 15... $\mathbb{W}e7N=$) 15... $\mathbb{W}e7=$ Petrosian – Ehlvest, Ivano Frankovsk 1982.

11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ f5 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 13.f4

This was played in the only game, but White may look to improve with 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2?N$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ with mutual chances.



13...gxf4

Another possible plan is: 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7N$ 14.a4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ (15.fxg5 f4??) 15...g4??

14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 16.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7??$

Black is close to completing development and he can feel happy with the outcome of the opening.

17.e4?!

17.a4N $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ would have kept the position roughly equal.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ b5 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ b4 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Now in Renaze – Bouaziz, Cannes 1997, Black could have obtained the better chances using a nice idea:

20...a6!?

Preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}b5$.

10...b6

This is the main line. Black has tried several

other moves, but I would like to focus on one particularly interesting option:

10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!?$

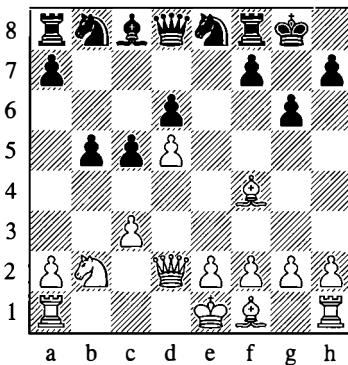
Normally it would be crazy to make this exchange, but Black wants to rush through with ...b5.

11.bxc3

11. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6N$ (12...f5 13.h4± Dzagnidze – Krush, Khanty-Mansiysk [ol] 2010.) 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 14.e4 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5?!$ (15...a6=) 16. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}b7=$

11...b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$

The knight is more or less forced to settle for this suboptimal square, as 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3? g5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ f5 14.f4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ would be awkward.



12... $\mathbb{Q}a6!?$

This new idea makes sense to me.

12... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ was enough for a playable position in two old games: 13.g3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ f5 15.0–0 c4 (15... $\mathbb{Q}df6$ 16.a4 a6 17.axb5 axb5 18.c4± Antoshin – Tal, Leningrad 1956.) 16. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ Van den Berg – Korchnoi, Wijk aan Zee 1971. 16... $\mathbb{Q}c5N=$

13.e4

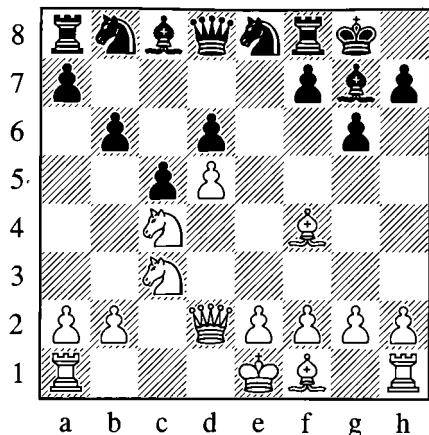
13.a4 b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}f4$ (16.f3 $\mathbb{Q}b7??$) 16... $\mathbb{Q}h5??$

13...c4

Making way for the knight to come to c5.

14. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d4$ f6

Both sides have weaknesses, and the middlegame should be roughly balanced.



11.e3 ♕a6

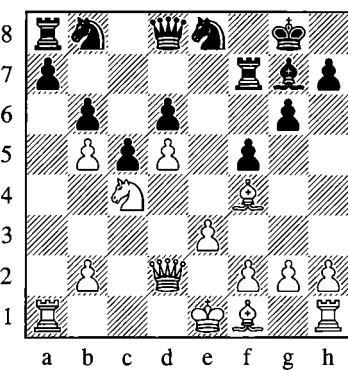
Not for the first time in the book, Black makes it his priority to challenge the strong knight on c4.

12.a4 f5

There is no need to hurry with the exchange on c4. Instead Black should wait for the enemy bishop to develop so that he can win a tempo. Exchanging immediately with 12...♕xc4 13.♕xc4 a6 14.0–0 ♔d7 15.♕e2 ♜c8± left Black a little short of equality in Sakurai – C. Sanchez, Haifa 1976.

13.♕e2

White has tried a few different ideas here. 13.♔b5 ♜xb5 14.axb5 ♜f7?! An interesting idea. In other parts of the book we have seen the other rook swing via a7 to the kingside, but here Black uses the same idea in reverse! (There is also nothing wrong with natural development: 14...♔d7N 15.♕e2 ♔e5=)

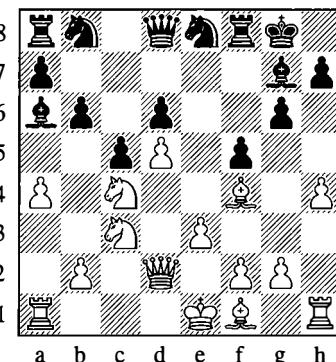


15.♕e2 a6 16.0–0 ♜fa7 17.bxa6 ♜xa6 18.♕a3 ♜c7 19.e4 fxe4 20.♕e3 b5 21.♔a3 ♜f7 22.g3 ♜ac7– Lie – Arakhamia-Grant, Reykjavik 2008.

13.h3 occurred in Viner – Schutt, corr. 1965, and here a logical reply would have been: 13...♔d7! Offering a pawn for compensation. The continuation might be 14.♔xd6 ♜xf1 15.♕xf1 ♜xd6 16.♔xd6 ♜f7 17.♔g3 c4∞ with good chances for Black.

13.h4?!

This is a logical idea, even though it has not been played in the last thirty years.



13...♔xc4

Commencing queenside counterplay.

Compared with the 13.h3 line mentioned above, the pawn sacrifice 13...♔d7N is less convincing here. After 14.♔xd6 ♜xf1 15.♕xf1 ♜xd6 16.♔xd6 ♜f7 the presence of the pawn on h4 restrains the ...g5 advance, allowing the white bishop to settle on the f4-square. Furthermore White may even have ideas of ♜h3 and/or h4-h5 at some point.

14.♕xc4 a6 15.♕e2

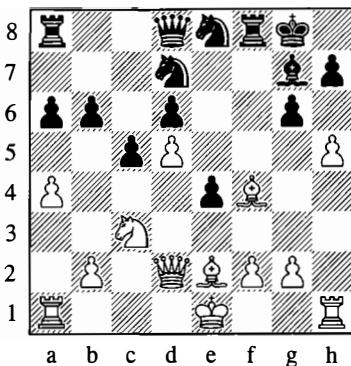
15.♕e2 ♜f6 16.♔d3 occurred in Borisenco – Boleslavsky, Moscow 1961, and now 16...♔h5N would have been equal.

15...♔d7 16.e4?!

This sacrifice isn't a complete disaster, but it hardly seems necessary.

16...fxe4 17.h5

Black has many good moves here, but I like the following idea the most:



17... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!?$ N

17... $\mathbb{Q}df6$ was playable but less convincing in Farago – Velimirovic, Amsterdam 1976.
18.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}f6$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20.hxg6 hxg6 \rightleftarrows

Black remains a pawn up and his knights are poised to take up excellent positions on e5 and f5, enabling them to fight against the enemy bishop pair.

13... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$

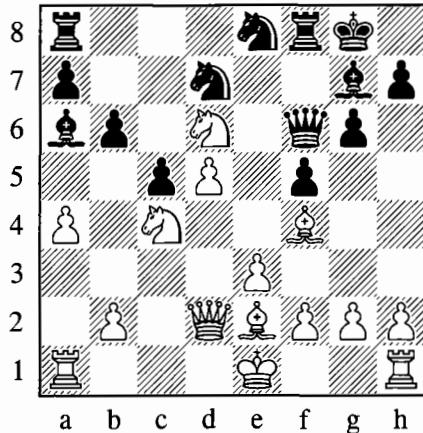
I also analysed: 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ a6 16.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 17.f4 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ Black has a comfortable and solid position. 18. $\mathbb{Q}f2?!$ b5 19.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ axb5 \bar{F} Osnos – Forintos, Leningrad 1962.

14... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$ N

14... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 15.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 16.h4 $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2\pm$ Hanison – Giobbi, e-mail 2002.

15. $\mathbb{Q}bx d6$

15.h3 g5 16. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ f4 \rightleftarrows



15... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe8$

16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4?$ g5 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ f4 wins a piece for questionable compensation.

16... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ $\mathbb{Q}xal$ 19.d6† $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8\bar{F}$

The position is balanced, as White has sufficient compensation for the exchange but not more.

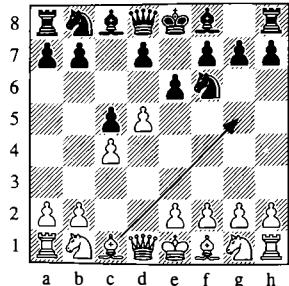
Conclusion

We have seen that Black has more than one acceptable way of meeting the Knight's Tour Variation. 7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ seems quite playable and can be recommended to players who are happy to avoid the main theoretical paths. In the main line with 7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 0–0 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$, we looked at two contrasting approaches for Black. B31) 9...b6 requires a lot of preparation and willingness to take risks, so it should only be used by players with an especially strong desire to reach a complicated position. The more reliable B32) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ will be a more appropriate choice for most readers. I believe in Black's chances here, and like a wise man said a long time ago, it is not good to move the same piece several times in the opening!

Chapter 19

Lines without e4

Lines with an early ♘g5



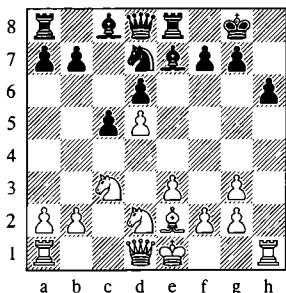
Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5

3...e6

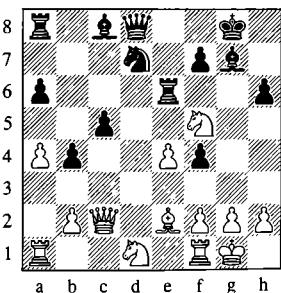
A) 4.♘g5 h6 5.♘h4	262
A1) 5...d6	263
A2) 5...g5!?	263
B) 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♘f3 g6 7.♘g5	265
B1) 7...h6	265
B2) 7...♘g7	266
B21) 8.e4	266
B22) 8.♘d2	267

A1) after 13.hxg3



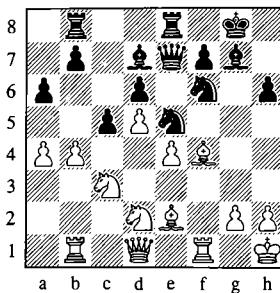
13...♗f6 N†

B21) after 20.♘f5



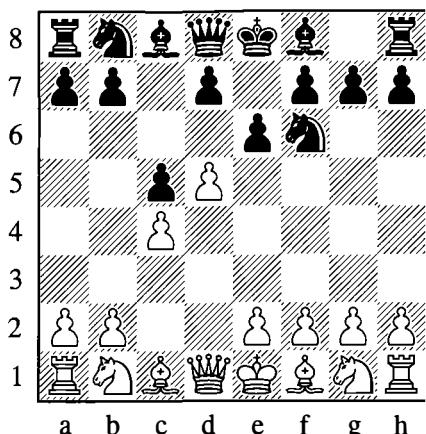
20...♗g5 N‡

B22) note to 9...g5



19...cx b4 N

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6



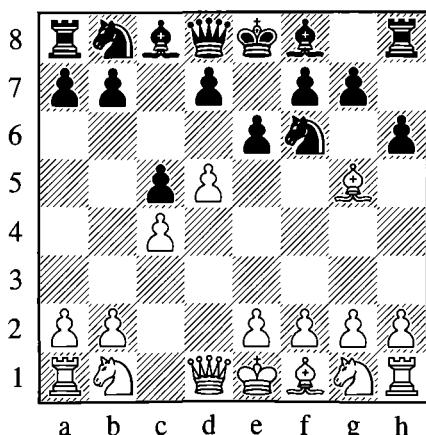
In this chapter we will deal with some lines where the white bishop comes to g5 in the early stages. We will begin by analysing the extremely rare A) 4.♗g5 before considering the more common B) 4.♗c3 (followed by ♗g5 in the near future).

A) 4.♗g5

This Benoni-Trompowsky hybrid is nothing special, but we should check it all the same.

4...h6

As a general rule, if White plays ♗g5 early then it is usually good to nudge the bishop. There is also nothing wrong with 4...exd5 5.cxd5 d6, when 6.♗c3 g6 (6...♗e7 is also playable) 7.♗f3 leads to variation B.



5.♗h4

White can also exchange:

5.♗xf6 ♜xf6 6.♗c3 d6 7.♗f3 e5!?

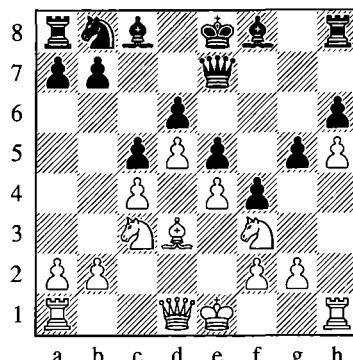
The solid 7...♗e7N is fine, for instance: 8.g3 0-0 9.♗g2 ♜d7 10.dxe6 fxe6=

8.e3N

8.e4 ♜e7 9.♗e2 0-0 was equal in Trohimchuk – Mirzoian, Orel 1998. After the text move I considered a somewhat amusing continuation.

8...g6 9.♗d3 ♜e7 10.h4 f5 11.e4 f4 12.h5 g5

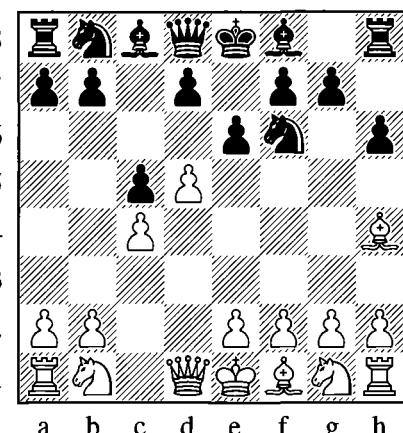
Black is playing provocatively, moving virtually nothing but pawns so far.



13.♗a4† ♜d7

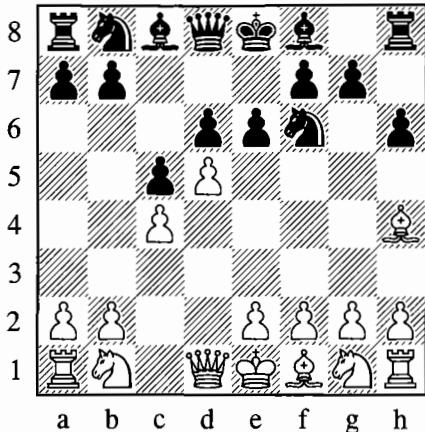
13...♗f7?! is an interesting attempt to confuse the opponent, but objectively White must be a little better here.

14.♗b3 ♜c8=



Now Black can choose between the solid A1) 5...d6 and the sharp A2) 5...g5!?.

A1) 5...d6

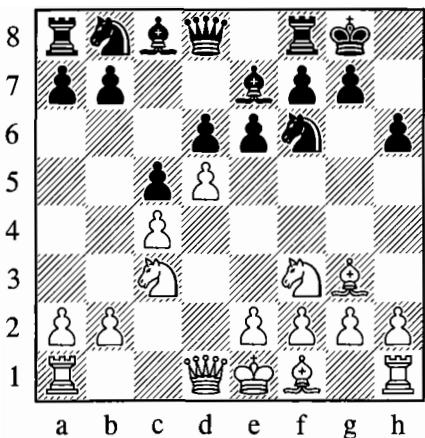


6.Qc3 Qe7 7.Qf3 0-0

By delaying the pawn exchange on d5, Black threatens to win a pawn with ... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$. (Please note that the immediate 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd5??$ is refuted by 8.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 9. $\mathbb{W}a4+!$.)

8.Qg3

8.e4? has been seen in a couple of games, but on both occasions Black failed to carry out his threat: 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5+N$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d8+$

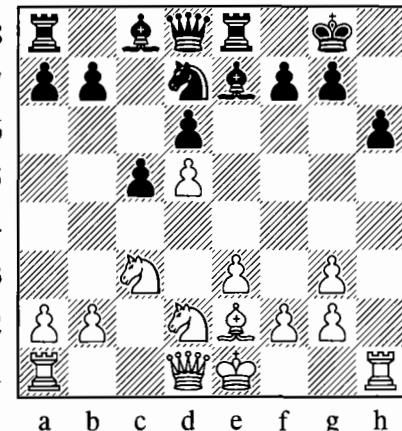


8...exd5 9.cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}h5$

Also after 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5!?$ N I prefer Black slightly.

10.e3 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 11.Qe2 $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 12.Qd2 $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 13.hxg3

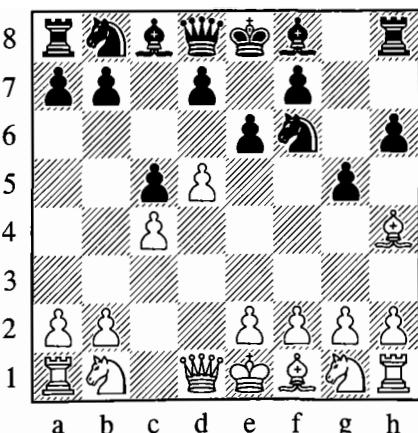
This position occurred in Golod – Anastasian, Ubeda 2001. Black has a few good options here but my choice would be:



13...Qf6N†

Black has a comfortable Benoni position with slightly better chances in my opinion.

A2) 5...g5!?



This ambitious move aims to create immediate problems for the opponent.

6.♕g3

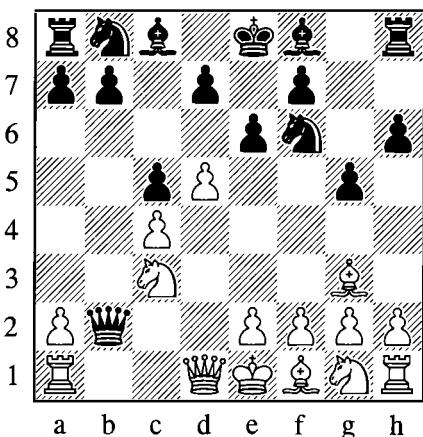
Dollah – Oberholzer, Istanbul 2000. Here I found a promising way for Black to exert immediate pressure on the queenside.

6...♗b6!N 7.♘c3

7.♔e5 ♔g7 8.♘c3 d6 9.♔xf6 ♔xf6†

7...♗xb2

Having threatened the b-pawn Black must call his opponent's bluff. Now there are some complications, but it all seems to turn out well for Black.

**8.♔e5**

8.♘b5? ♘e4!†

I also considered 8.♗c1 d6 9.e4 exd5 10.cxd5 ♘bd7 when White has a bit of compensation but Black's chances are higher.

8...♘e4!

The brave pirates attempt a daring raid!

9.♗c1

9.♗b1? lets Black take everything: 9...♘xc3 10.♗xb2 ♘xd1 The final step of the knight's short but glorious career. 11.♗xd1 ♗g8†

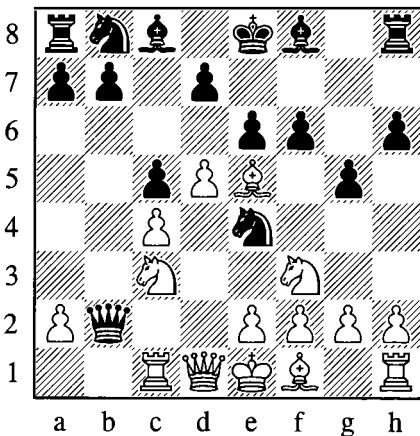
The alternative is: 9.♗xh8 ♘xc3 10.♗c1 (10.♗b1? ♗xb1–+) 10...♗xc1† 11.♗xc1 ♘xa2 12.♗b1 exd5 13.cxd5 ♘b4†

9...f6!

An important resource.

10.♘f3

10.♘xe4 ♗xe5†

**10...♘xf2!**

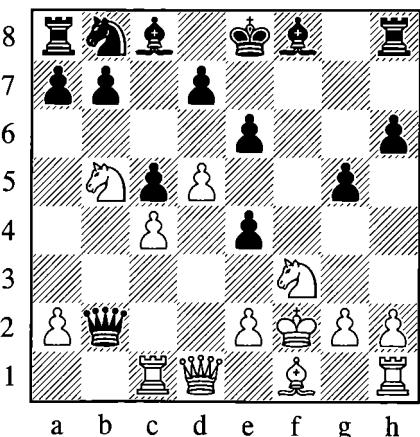
Again the knight is the star of the show.

11.♔xf2 ♗xe5 12.♘b5

12.♗c2 ♗b6 13.♗d3 exd5 14.♗xd5 ♗d6† Long live the queen! She managed to escape and defend everything.

12...e4!

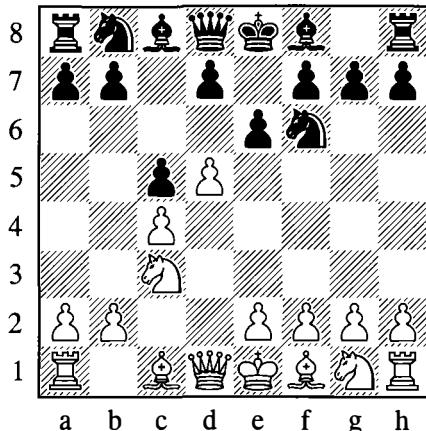
The only move, but good enough.



13. $\mathbb{B}c2 \mathbb{W}f6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xa8 \mathbb{Q}g7\#$

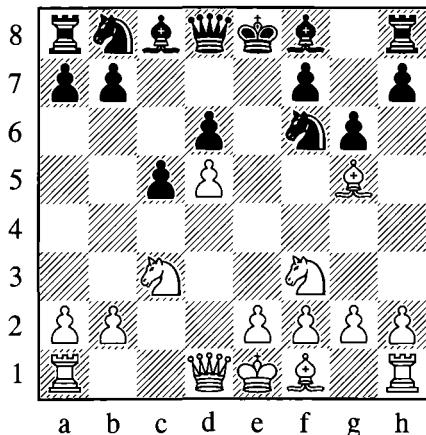
Black's ambitious opening play has clearly been justified.

B) 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$



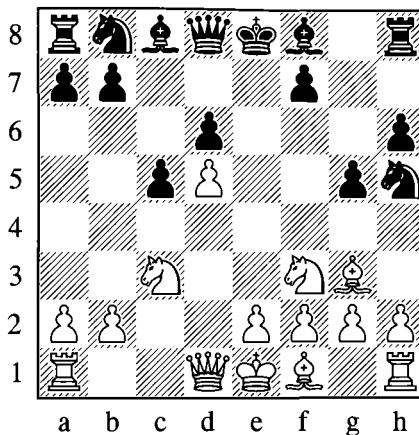
In this section we will look at some systems involving an early $\mathbb{Q}g5$ after a couple more conventional Benoni moves by both sides.

4...exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



Now there are two distinct approaches for Black: **B1) 7...h6** and **B2) 7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$** . The former implies an immediate hunt for the dark-squared bishop, while the second involves more straightforward development.

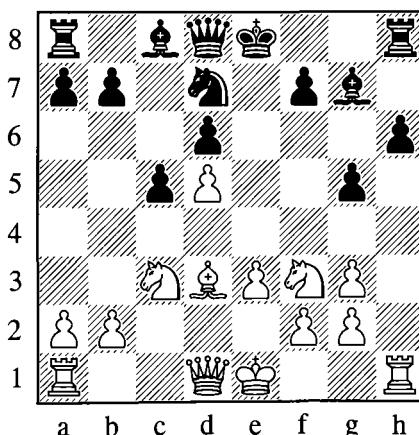
B1) 7...h6 8. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ g5 9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}h5$



The bishop's days are numbered, so White will attempt to make use of the soon-to-be-open h-file and the slight weakness of the kingside light squares, especially f5.

10.e3 $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ 11.hxg3 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

12...0–0 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$ f5 14.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15.a3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ was also satisfactory for Black in Razuvaev – Holm, Polanica Zdroj 1972, and a few subsequent games.



13. $\mathbb{W}c2 \mathbb{W}e7$

The bishop pair gives Black good chances, and the weakness of the f5-square does not hurt him too much. If White could somehow

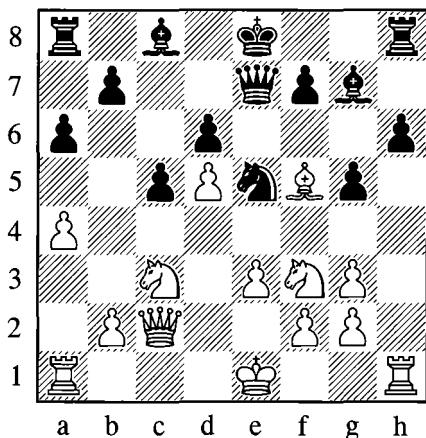
exchange the light-squared bishops and plant a knight on f5 then things would be different, but that is not going to happen anytime soon.

14.a4

It seems logical to keep the rook on the h-file for a few more moves at least. The following game saw a different approach: 14.0–0 h5!? (14...0–0 15.♗ae1 a6 16.a4 ♘b8= was also comfortable for Black in Antoshin – Honfi, Luhacovice 1971.) 15.♘f5 ♗e5 16.♘xc8 ♘xf3† 17.gxf3 ♘xc8 18.♗f5 ♘d8 19.♗g2 ♘e5 20.♗xe5† ♘xe5= Hartston – Sowray, London 1980.

14...a6 15.♘f5 ♗e5

Black can also keep more pieces on the board: 15...♗b8 16.a5 0–0 17.0–0 b5 18.axb6 ♘xb6= Shumilov – Hedman, Pardubice 2010.



16.a5 ♘xf5 17.♗xf5 ♘d7 18.♗xd7†

Now in the game Chetverik – Niemi, Budapest 2005, Black should have played:

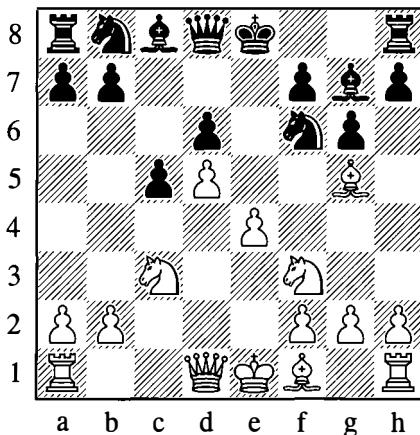
18...♗xd7†

With equal chances.

B2) 7...♗g7

This time Black develops his own bishop before chasing his opponent's. We will consider both B21) 8.e4 and B22) 8.♘d2.

B21) 8.e4



Even if you prefer line B1 with the early 7...h6, it is worth studying the present variation, as it might occur via a different move order with 8.♘g5 being White's last move.

8...h6 9.♘h4 a6!

9...g5 10.♗g3 ♘h5 11.♗b5† is slightly annoying.

10.♘d2??

After 10.a4 g5 11.♗g3 ♘h5 Black has a comfortable position as there are no troublesome checks on b5 or a4. The game may continue 12.♘d2 ♘xg3 13.hxg3 ♘d7= with comfortable play for Black, Weber – Tan Lian Ann, Skopje (ol) 1972.

10...b5

Black has won some space on the queenside and it is not clear if White will be able to achieve anything in the centre.

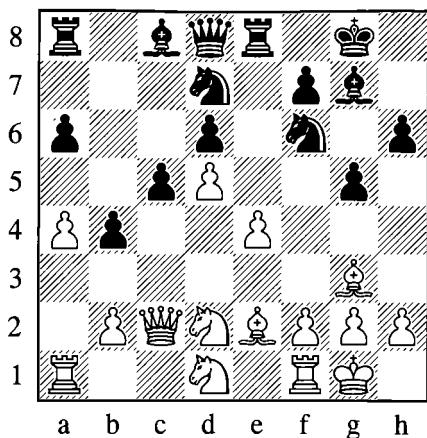
11.♗e2 0–0 12.♗c2 ♘bd7 13.0–0 ♘e8

Black continues developing fluidly.

14.a4 b4 15.♘d1 g5

Another approach is: 15...b3 16.♗b1 g5 17.♗g3 ♘xd5 18.♘c4 ♘f4 19.♗xf4 gxh4 20.♘xd6 ♘e6 21.♘f5= Atakisi – Grigoryev, e-mail 2005.

16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$



16... $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$

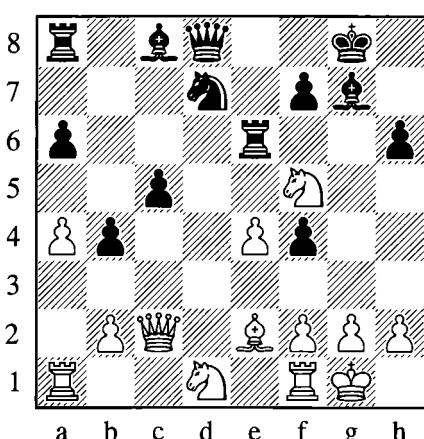
This kind of tactic can occur in many Benoni positions with a rook on e8.

17. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

17. $\mathbb{Q}f3?$! $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 18. e5? d5 (18... $\mathbb{B}b8N\rightleftharpoons$ is also strong) was excellent for Black in Groffen – Berg, Liverpool 2008.

17... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $gxf4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{B}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}f5$

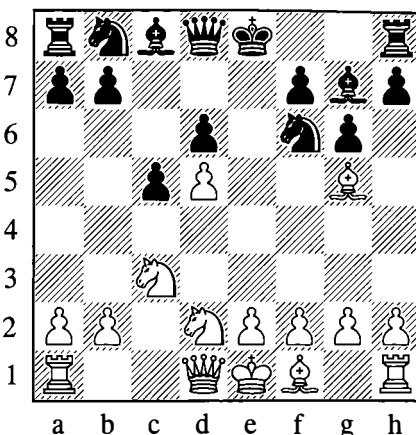
Lubas – Emelyanov, e-mail 2008. Here it is worth considering:



20... $\mathbb{W}g5N\rightleftharpoons$

Black has an active, dynamic position. Meanwhile the knight on d1 will need some time to find a good place.

B22) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



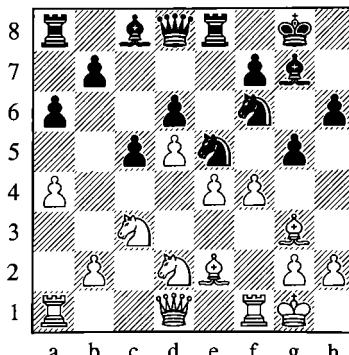
This time White has the idea of pushing his e- and f-pawns, but once again we can employ the typical plan of hunting the bishop.

8... $h6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $g5$

This works fine, but it is also worth mentioning a second decent line:

9...0–0 10. e4 a6 11. a4 $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 13.0–0 g5 14. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. f4

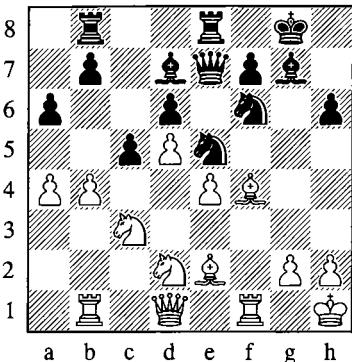
Opening the kingside is White's most challenging plan, but the strong knight on e5 holds everything together.



15... $gxf4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

It is hard for White to develop an attack, so he switches his attention to the other flank.
18.♗b1 ♗ab8 19.b4

Now I would like to offer an improvement on the game Cherniaev – Kuznetsov, Moscow 2008.

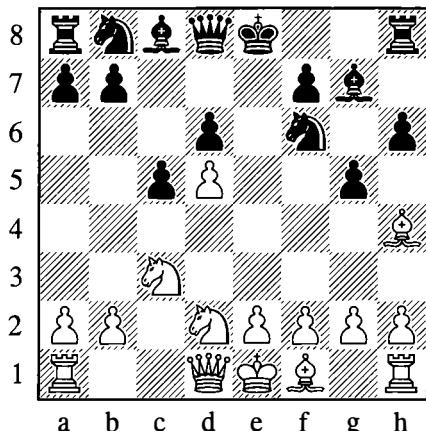


20...cx b4N

It is best to open the c-file.

20.♗xb4 ♗ec8 21.♗b3 ♗g6

Black has sufficient counterplay.



10.♗g3 ♗h5 11.♗a4†??

An interesting way to cause problems, but we will survive it.

11...♔f8

Black must forfeit the right to castle, as 11...♔d7? 12.♗e4† is unplayable.

12.♗c2 ♗xg3 13.hxg3 ♗d7

As usual in such positions, Black's bishop pair gives him good chances. The king is slightly misplaced on f8 but it is of no great consequence.

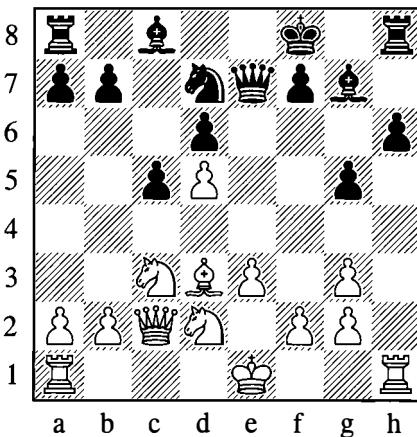
14.e3 ♗e7

I prefer this move over 14...♗e5, after which 15.♗e2 a6 16.a4 ♗e7 17.a5 gave White a slight edge in Voronov – Zherebukh, Alushta 2008.

15.♗d3

In the event of 15.♗e2 Black may be tempted to try 15...♗f6!?! with ideas of ...h5.

The text move provokes simplifications which are not dangerous for Black.



15...♗e5 16.♗f5 ♗xf5 17.♗xf5 ♗f6 18.♗xf6 ♗xf6 19.♗ce4 ♗e7 20.♗xf6 ♗xf6 21.♗e2 ♗g6=

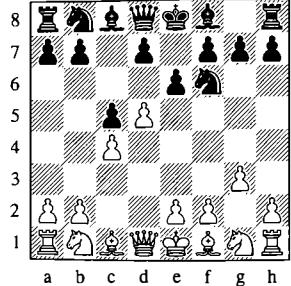
Kempinski – Kanovsky, Czech Republic 2012.

Conclusion

In general we have seen that the earlier White plays ♗g5, the brighter Black's prospects for early counterplay. Even when White leaves the bishop development until slightly later, the second player keeps a sound position and will usually have more than one good way to navigate the opening.

Chapter 20

Lines without e4



4.g3

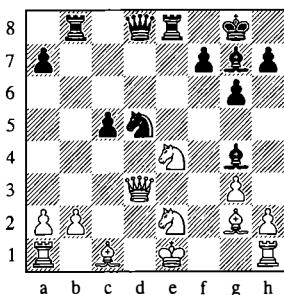
Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.g3

4...exd5 5.cxd5 b5!?

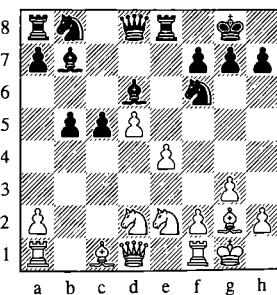
A) 6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ d6	270
A1) 7.e4	270
A2) 7.b4!?	272
B) 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 7.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$	273
B1) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$ N	274
B2) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$	275
C) 6.e4!?	277
C1) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$	277
C2) 7. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$	280
C21) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$	281
C22) 8...f5 9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ b4	283
C221) 10.0–0	285
C222) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$	286
C223) 10.d6	288

A1) after 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$



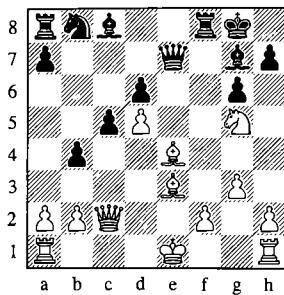
17...f5!N

A2) after 12.0–0



12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7!N$

C222) after 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$



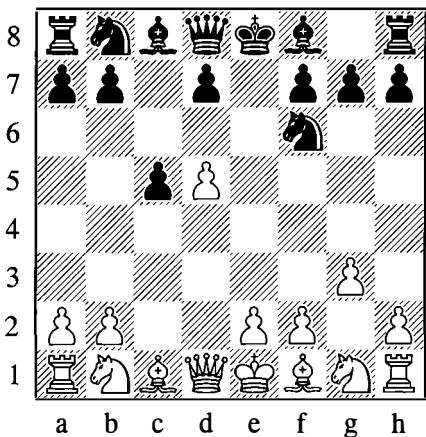
15... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$ N

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.g3

White's last move is exceedingly rare in this particular move order sequence. However, the above position often occurs via the move order 1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 e6, which has the idea of answering 3.♘c3 with 3...♝b4, and 3.♘f3 or 3.g3 with 3...c5 inviting a Benoni. Thus after 3.g3 c5 4.d5 we reach the main position.

Why should Black use the 2...e6 move order?

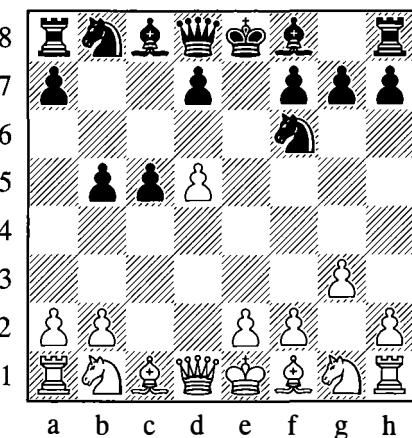
There are many players who are only willing to enter a Modern Benoni after White has committed himself to ♜f3 or g2-g3, usually due to fear of the Flick-Knife Attack. In the early part of the book I analysed this sharp system and concluded that Black had fully adequate resources, but I am well aware that many readers will continue to prefer the 2...e6 move order for their own reasons. So let's see a couple more moves.

4...exd5 5.cxd5**5...b5!?**

Now we reach a second topic of discussion in the early phase of the game. In the present position many players will prefer the simple 5...d6, which almost always transposes to a Fianchetto System (see Chapter 17). If you wish to minimize your workload then feel

free to skip this entire chapter and play 5...d6 followed by 6...g6, as White can hardly hope to do anything better than putting his bishop on g2 and knights on c3 and f3.

Nevertheless there are many players who like to challenge White's move order by opting for the immediate queenside expansion, and ultimately I felt as though I would have been leaving the book incomplete if I had failed to cover this ambitious plan.



White now has the following options:

A) 6.♗g2, B) 6.♘f3 and C) 6.e4!?

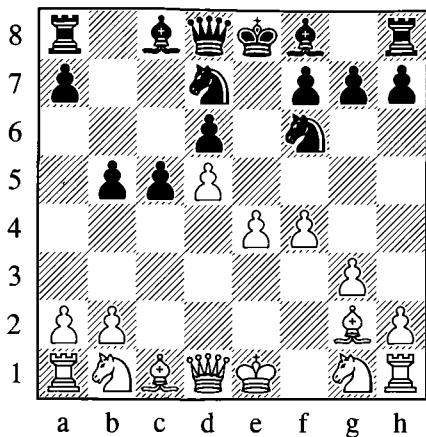
A) 6.♗g2 d6

Here White has tried virtually every legal move, but we will focus on the two primary options of A1) 7.e4 and A2) 7.b4!?

A1) 7.e4 ♜bd7 8.f4

This is the only really challenging move, but such ambitious schemes can easily backfire as we will soon see.

The quieter 8.♗e2 g6 9.0–0 ♜g7 leaves White equal at best. Black's queenside expansion gives him a more comfortable version of a normal Benoni, and I see no reason to analyse further.



8...g6 9.We2

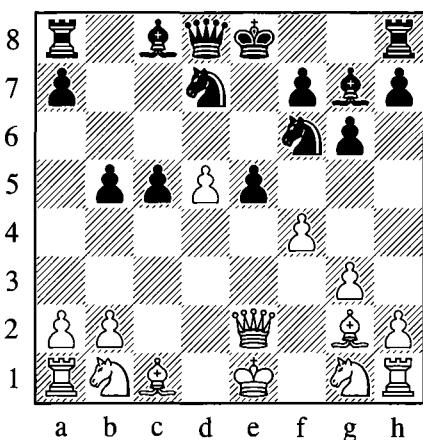
White is working hard to force through e4–e5, but neglecting his development brings certain consequences.

9...Bg7 10.e5

After 10.Wxb5? 0–0 White's lack of development was almost comical in Milovanovic – Movre, corr. 1980, and his eventual victory was certainly not thanks to the opening.

10...dxe5!

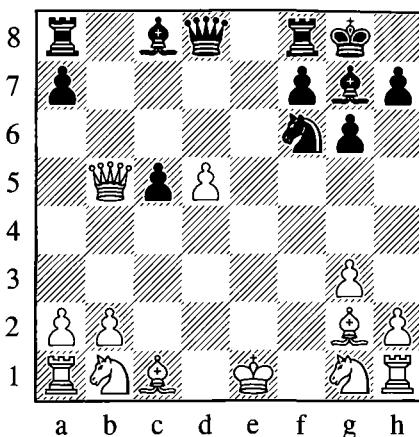
10...0–0 also gives Black good chances to seize the initiative, but the text move is even stronger.



11.fxe5 0–0 12.exf6 Qxf6

So White has won a piece, but he has paid a high price indeed. He is way behind in development and his king risks being caught in the centre.

13.Wxb5



13...Rb8!

The rook is untouchable.

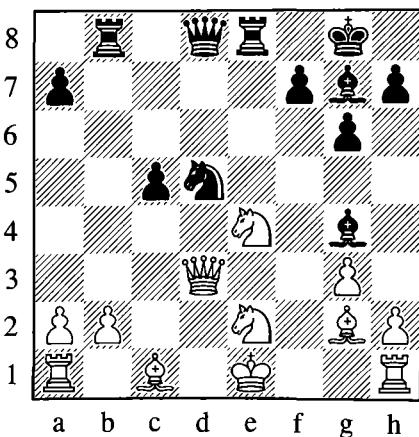
14.Wd3

14.Wxb8?? Rxe8† 15.Qe2 Rxe2† –

14...Rxe8† 15.Qe2 Bg4 16.Qbc3 Qxd5

17.Qe4

We have been following the game V. Gaprindashvili – Ibrahimov, Urumia 2008. Black has many wins here, but perhaps the simplest is:

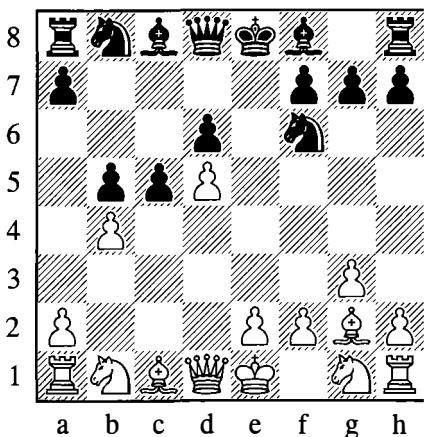


17...f5!N

Amongst others we could mention 17... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ N 18. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2-$ -.

18. $\mathbb{W}xd5\#$ $\mathbb{W}xd5$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2-$ -

White is two pawns down with an exposed king and poor pieces, so it is safe to say that the opposite-coloured bishops offer him scant hope of saving the game.

A2) 7.b4!?

This would make a promising gambit, if only Black was forced to accept it.

7... $\mathbb{Q}b7!$?

Inviting White to exchange on c5, which will lead to a sharp and unbalanced position in which both sides have significant pawn majorities in their respective areas of dominance. It is worth mentioning a couple of other possibilities.

Taking the pawn is risky: 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$?! 8.a3 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ (I also considered 8...a5!N 9. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$?! 10. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ 11.bxa5 $\mathbb{W}xa5\#$ when Black has managed to clear the flank, although after 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ White still has the initiative.) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ Black has many options here, but White has good compensation everywhere, for instance:

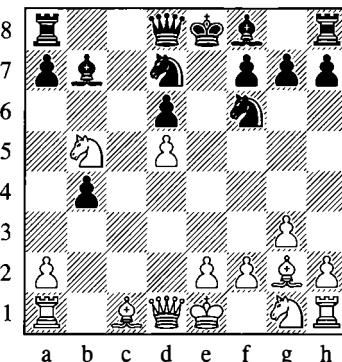
9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4\uparrow$

Another option is:

7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

8.bxc5 dxc5?! can be compared with the main line below.

8...cxgb4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

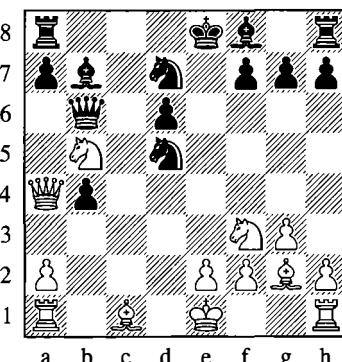


10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

10.e4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 11.f3 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd4$ 0-0 14.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}e5=$ 16.h3?! $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}ac8\mp$ Vertes – Zebre, e-mail 2006.

10... $\mathbb{W}b6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$!N

11...a6 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd4$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 14.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c8\infty$ Murden – Kauppinen, e-mail 2008.



12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ 0-0-0

This may look risky, but I think it is okay for Black.

13. $\mathbb{Q}bd4$ $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$

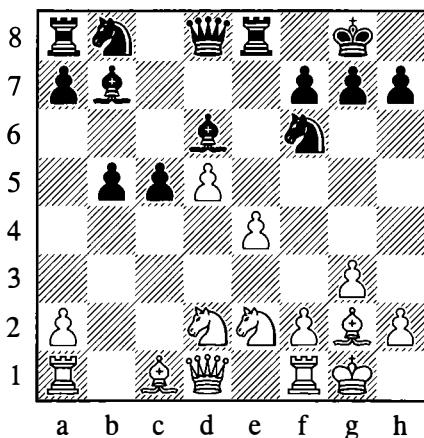
White has yet to prove his compensation for the pawn.

8.bxc5

Quiet moves achieve nothing, for instance:
 8.a3 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ a6 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}c8$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$
 $\mathbb{Q}b6\rightarrow$ Mascaro March – Carlsson, Soller 2006.

8...dxc5 9.e4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0–0 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ **12.0–0**

Now in the game Chernin – Timman, Saint Vincent 2000, Black made the slightly odd decision to put his bishop on a6. Instead I would like to propose a more natural alternative:

**12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7!$ N**

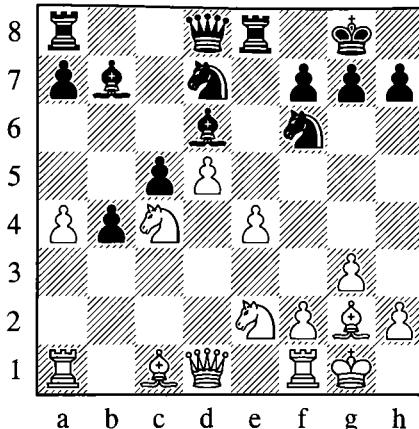
This brings Black a good game, especially if White gets too aggressive.

13.a4

This natural move backfires. White should try playing more patiently although I don't believe Black has anything to fear, especially after the following unfortunate try: 13.f4? c4+ 14.e5 $\mathbb{W}b6\uparrow$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ bxc4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{E}ad8-$ +

13...b4

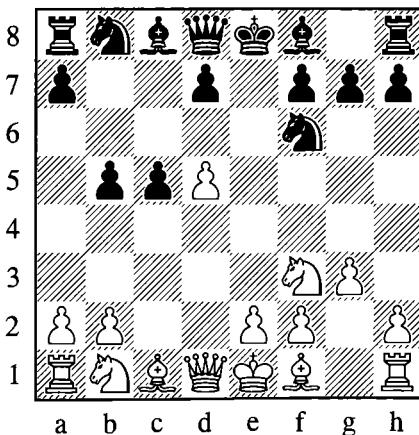
13...a6 14. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ is equal, but Black should be happy to advance his pawn majority, as the loss of the c4-square does not hurt him.

14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ **14... $\mathbb{Q}e5!$**

Forcing an immediate exchange of the strong knight. Here is an illustrative line:

**15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 16.f4 $\mathbb{Q}ed7$ 17.e5 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$
18.fxe5 $\mathbb{W}xe5$ 19. $\mathbb{E}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5-$ +**

Black's pawns are too much for White to handle, even with an extra piece.

B) 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 

This tricky move was recommended by Boris Avrukh in the popular *Grandmaster Repertoire 2 – 1.d4 Volume Two*, so we had better be ready for it. By delaying the e2-e4 advance for a move, White maintains the option of deploying his bishop on the f1-a6 diagonal.

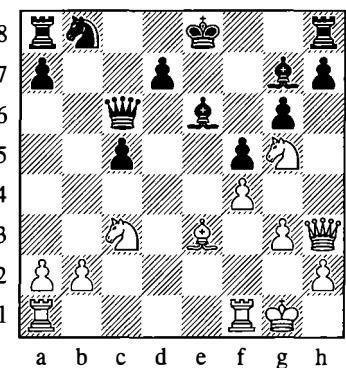
6... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

This seems critical. The main alternative is 6...d6, but then 7.e4 gives White quite good chances.

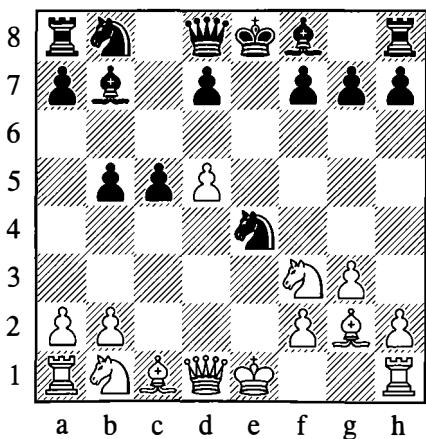
7.e4 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}g2$

White has given up a pawn for the initiative, and Black must play carefully to avoid being pressed.

8. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ is not dangerous, as shown by the following example. 8... $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 10.0–0 $\mathbb{W}xb5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}bc3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 13.f4 f5 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 15. $\mathbb{W}h5\#$ g6 16. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17. $\mathbb{W}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



18... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (another idea is 18... $\mathbb{Q}a6\#N$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $dxe6$ 20. $\mathbb{E}ad1$ 0–0#) 19. $\mathbb{E}fe1$ Now in Nyback – Andreikin, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009, Black could have maintained the better chances with 19... $\mathbb{Q}d8\#N$ 20.g4 $\mathbb{Q}a6\#$.



In this position Black has two playable continuations: **B1)** 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6\#N$ and **B2)** 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$.

B1) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d6\#N$

Avrukh does not like this move much, but I think it is okay. The idea is not only to develop, but also to prevent $\mathbb{Q}f4$.

9.0–0

The immediate 9. $\mathbb{Q}h4\#?$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ can be met by 10...0–0, relying on a basic tactical defence: 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ (11.0–0 transposes to the main line below.) 11... $\mathbb{W}e7\#$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 13.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{E}el$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}ae8=$

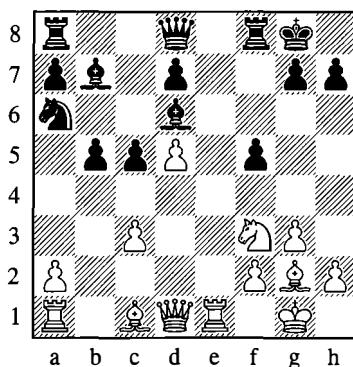
9...0–0 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4\#!$

Avrukh's recommendation, and definitely the critical test. Less dangerous is: 10. $\mathbb{E}e1$ f5

10... $\mathbb{E}e8$ is also good: 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{E}xe8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\#$

11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 12.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}a6$

Black has kept his extra pawn and does not face any major threats.

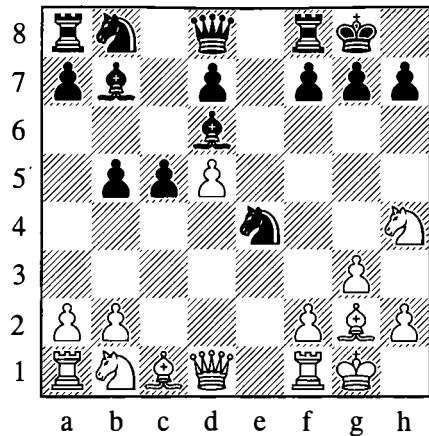


13. $\mathbb{E}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$

13... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14.a4 b4 also looks okay.

14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}c8$

White has some compensation but I would take Black if given the choice.

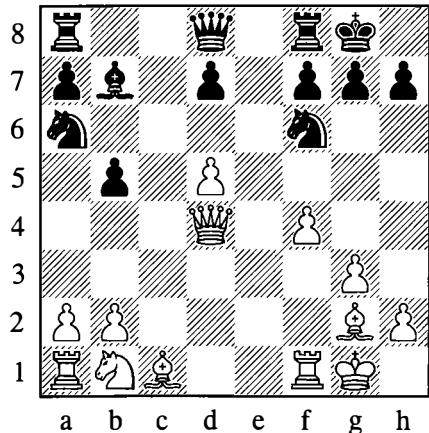


10...Qf6 11.Qf5 Qe5!

Avrukh only mentions 11...Wb6 12.a4! with some initiative for White. Instead I think Black should return his extra pawn after first provoking the following pawn move, which slightly exposes White's king and restricts his dark-squared bishop.

12.f4 Qd4† 13.Qxd4 cxd4 14.Wxd4 Qa6

White has the bishop pair, but Black is close to finishing development and the f4-pawn looks a little out of place.



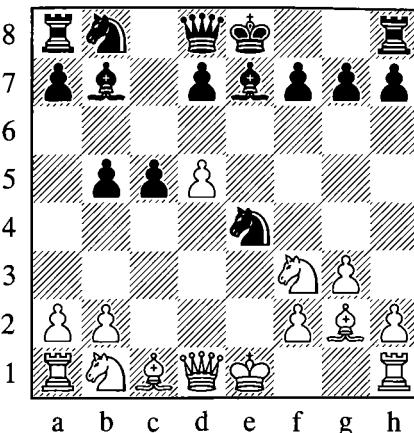
15.Qc3 b4 16.Qe4 Qxe4 17.Qxe4 Wb6

18.Qe3 Qf6

After a likely exchange of queens Black will obtain counterplay against the d5-pawn, although there is a potential risk of ending up

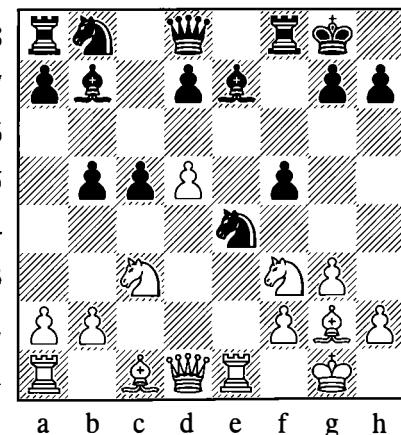
with a tricky endgame against the two bishops. If this is not to your taste, then see the next line below.

B2) 8...Qe7



9.0-0 0-0 10.Qe1 f5 11.Qc3

In this position I found an interesting new idea.



11...Qa6!N

Returning the pawn to catch up on development.

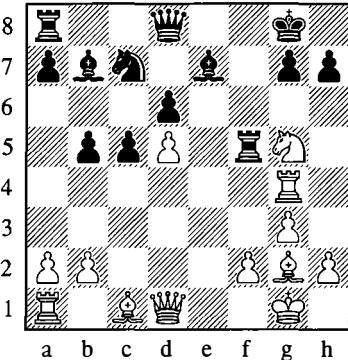
12.Qxe4

12.Qe5 Qd6 13.Qxe4 fxe4 transposes to the main line.

Avrukh briefly mentions 12.♕xb5 ♖b6 13.♕c3 as favouring White, but I think Black can improve with 12...♗b4!. A possible continuation is 13.♕c3 ♖f6 14.♕xe4 fxe4 15.♖xe4 ♖c8! with equal chances.

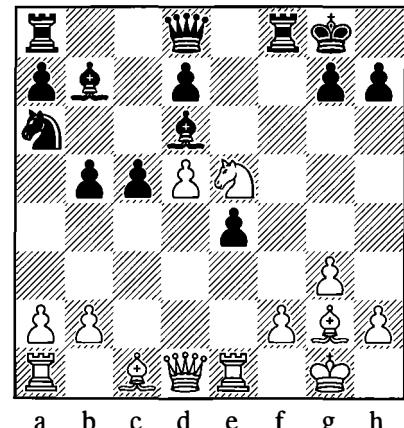
12...fxe4 13.♕e5

13.♖xe4 d6 14.♗g4 ♔c7 15.♗g5 ♗f5 leads to equality after the following forcing line:



16.♗xh7! ♕xh7 17.♕e4 ♕c8 18.♗f4 g6
19.♗xf5 ♕xf5 20.♗xf5 gxf5 21.♖h5† ♕g8
22.♖g6† ♕h8 23.♖h5†=

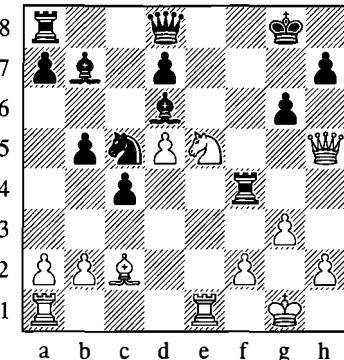
13...♗d6



14.♗xe4!?

I checked two other moves, both leading to approximate equality.

14.♗f4 c4 15.♗xe4 ♔c5 16.♗c2 ♕xf4 17.♗h5
(17.gxf4 ♕h4=) 17...g6



18.♗xg6! ♕e7! 19.♗xc4 hxg6 20.♗xg6† ♕g7
21.♗xg7† ♕xg7 22.♗xd6 ♕b4 23.♗xb7
♗xb7 24.♗e7† ♕f6 25.♗xd7 ♔c5 26.♗c7 ♔e4
27.b3 ♕d4=

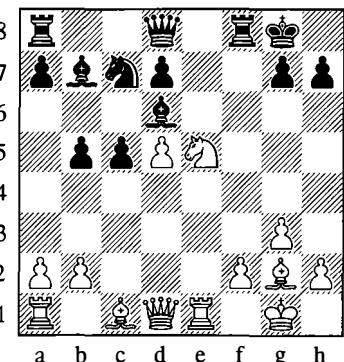
14.♗xe4 ♔c7

14...♗f5 15.f4 ♕xe5 16.♗xe5 is not what Black wants.

14...c4 15.♗h4 ♕xe5 16.♗h5 h6 17.♗xe5
♗e8 18.♗c3 b4 19.♗d2 ♕c8 is more interesting but still favours White.

15.♗e1

15.♗f4 ♔xd5 16.♗b3 c4 17.♗xb5 ♕b6
18.♗xb6 ♔xb6 19.♗xd7 ♕xe4 20.♗xe4
♗xf4 21.♗xf8 ♕xf8 22.gxf4 ♕xf4 23.f3 ♕f7
24.♗d1 g6=



15...♗xe5 16.♗xe5 ♕f6 17.♗f4 d6 18.♗e1 h6
19.♗d2 a5 20.h4 b4 21.a3 ♕ab8 22.h5

22.axb4 axb4 is similar.

22... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 23.axb4 axb4=

White has the bishop pair but the d5-pawn requires constant protection, so I think Black is okay.

14... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 15.f4 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 16.fxe5 $\mathbb{W}f2\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$

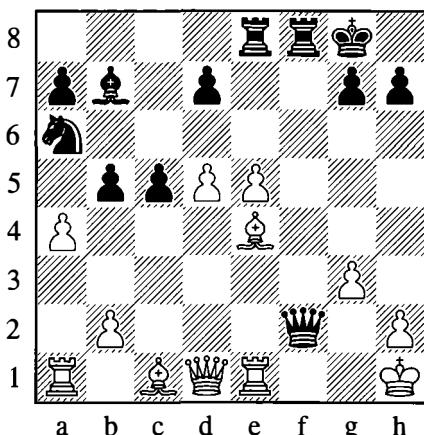
It is important for Black to do something with his temporary initiative before White catches up on development.

17... $\mathbb{E}ae8$

It is not so easy for White to develop the dark-squared bishop, as the b2-pawn would be left hanging.

18.a4

This appears critical, but Black can maintain the balance by tactical means.



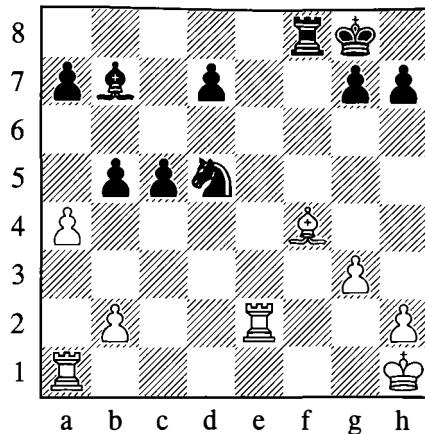
18... $\mathbb{E}xe5!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xh7\#?$ backfires: 19... $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xe5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ (21.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#+$) 21... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 22. $\mathbb{E}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}c3$ 24. $\mathbb{W}e1$ $\mathbb{W}xe1\#$ 25. $\mathbb{E}xe1$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{E}xe1\#$ 27. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$

19... $\mathbb{E}xe4$ 20. $\mathbb{E}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}e2$ $\mathbb{W}xe2$

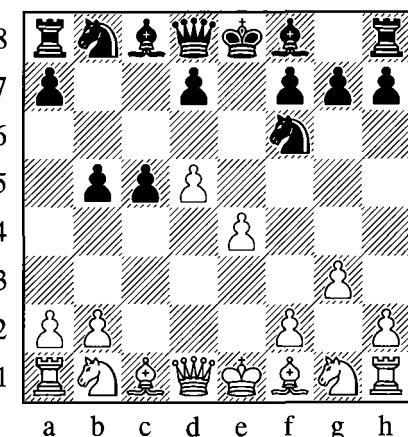
22. $\mathbb{E}xe2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

The complications have resulted in an approximately equal endgame.



23. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 24.gxf4 a6=

C) 6.e4!?



This is White's most aggressive attempt to fight for the advantage. The total number of games on the database is still relatively small (less than a hundred at the time of writing), so this line could be recommended to adventure-seeking players on either side.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

Now White has two significant options: he can develop his bishop immediately with C1) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ or play C2) 7. $\mathbb{W}e2$ first.

C1) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

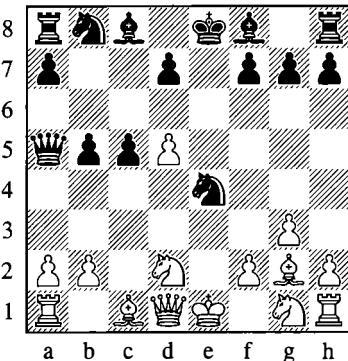
I also considered an untested but quite interesting alternative:

7... $\mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$?N 8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Alternatives are worse:

8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ d6 10. $\mathbb{Q}gf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$
11.0-0 0-0 12. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{W}d8\bar{f}$

8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ 9.bxc3 $\mathbb{W}xc3\uparrow$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$
 $\mathbb{W}f6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6\bar{f}$ White clearly has compensation, but the two-pawn sacrifice is perhaps pushing his luck too far.

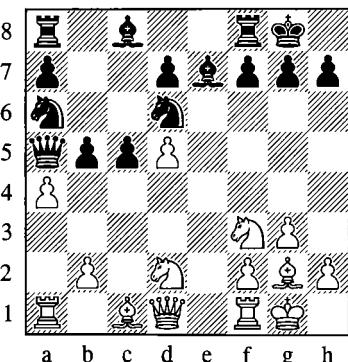


8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10.0-0 0-0

Compared with the main line the white knight has been driven to d2 instead of the more natural c3-square, but the black queen is also slightly exposed.

11.a4! $\mathbb{Q}a6$

11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ (12... $\mathbb{W}c7\uparrow$?! 13.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$! is excellent for White) 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$! $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 15.b4 puts Black under some pressure.



12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}d8$ 13.axb5 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
15.d6 $\mathbb{E}b8$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e1$
16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6\bar{s}$
16... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{E}xb3$ 18. $\mathbb{E}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}xa6$
19. $\mathbb{W}xa6$ $\mathbb{E}b6$ 20. $\mathbb{W}xa7$ $\mathbb{E}e6$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}xe1\pm$
22. $\mathbb{Q}xe1\pm$

White has good chances with two pieces against a rook.

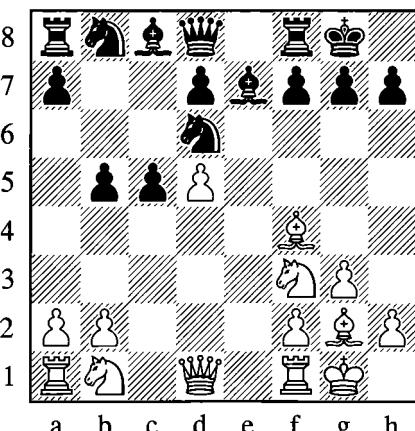
8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

The overoptimistic 8.b4? was played in Cativelli – Rodriguez Vila, Buenos Aires 2008, and here Black should have played 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6\uparrow$ N 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{W}e7\uparrow$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ with a clear advantage.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9.0-0 0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

10. $\mathbb{E}e1$ is likely to come to the same thing after a subsequent $\mathbb{Q}f4$.

Another game continued: 10.a4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ Alvarado – B. Socko, Warsaw (rapid) 2010, and now after 13...d6N 14. $\mathbb{Q}c6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ 15.dxc6 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 16. $\mathbb{E}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ the situation is dynamically balanced; White has about enough compensation for a pawn.



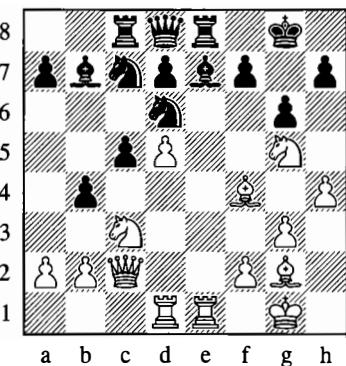
10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

I briefly checked 10... $\mathbb{Q}c4$, but found that after 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6\uparrow$ (11...d6 was played in Koneru – Dzagnidze, Mardin 2011, but after 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb5\uparrow$ N White is just better) 12.d6 $\mathbb{Q}f6$

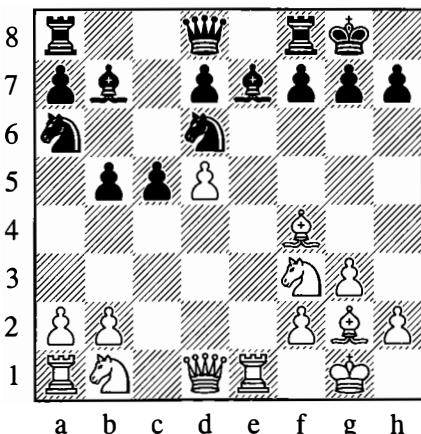
13.♕e4 White's chances are excellent.

11.♗e1 ♜b7

Another game continued: 11...♝e8 12.♕c3 ♜c7 13.♗c2 (13.♕g5?!N looks like an improvement.) 13...♜b7 14.h4 g6 15.♕g5 ♜c8 16.♗ad1 b4=



17.♕ce4?! ♜xe4 18.♗xe4 d6 19.♗g2?! Csapo – Forintos, Budapest 1968. 19...♞f6N+



12.♕c3 ♜c7

I also analysed:

12...b4 13.♗xd6

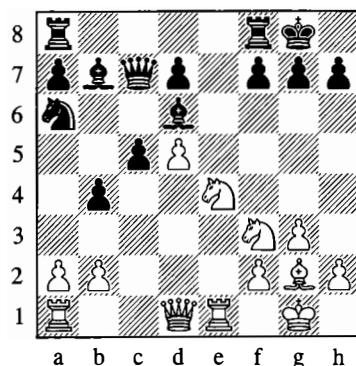
13.♘a4 ♜e8 14.b3 ♜f8 15.♗d3 g6 16.h4 ♜xe1† 17.♗xel Karner – Palac, Oberwart 2010. 17...♗f6≈

13...♜xd6 14.♕e4 ♜c7

14...♜e7 15.d6 ♜f6 16.♗xf6† ♜xf6 17.♕e5 ♜xg2 18.♗xg2 ♜ad8 19.♗d5± Tomashevsky

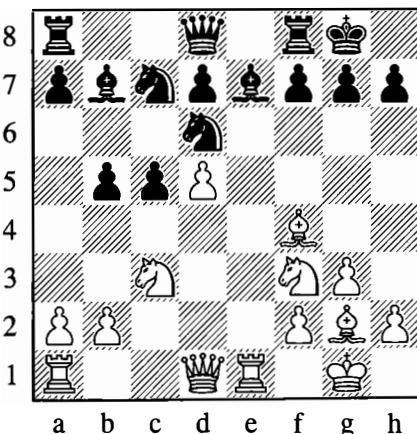
– Bocharov, Taganrog 2011.

14...♗b8 15.♗h4 ♜e5 16.d6 g6 17.♗xc5 ♜xc5 18.♗xe5 ♜xg2 19.♗xg2 ♜e6 20.♗e3 ♜g7 21.♗d3 ♜b6 22.♗b5 ♜a6 23.♗d5 ♜ab8 24.♗c7 ♜c6 25.♗xe6† fxe6 26.♗d4† ♜g8 27.♗xb4 ♜xb4 28.♗xb4 a6 Oren – Hicdoenmez, e-mail 2011. Black eventually drew the game but White is a pawn up in a one-sided endgame, so I cannot recommend this for Black.



15.♗h4N

Improving on the game Gleizerov – Medvegy, Banska Stiavnica 2011. With the knight on its way to f5 (which can even be played after 15...g6), White has the initiative.



13.♗d2!?

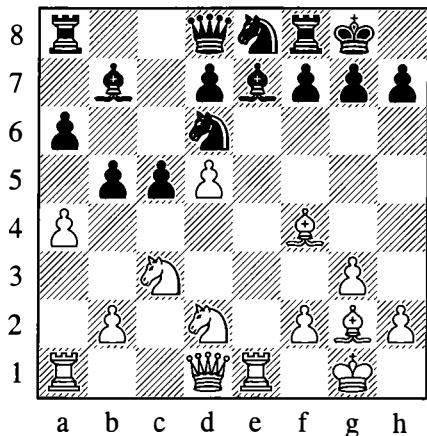
This seems like the best way to create problems.

13...Qce8

13...f5 led to a draw in another game:
 14.Qb3 c4 15.Qc5 Qc8 16.a4 Bb8 17.axb5
 Qxb5 18.Wa4 Qg5 19.Qe5 Qf6 20.Qf4 ½-½
 Brencher – Egoshin, e-mail 2011.

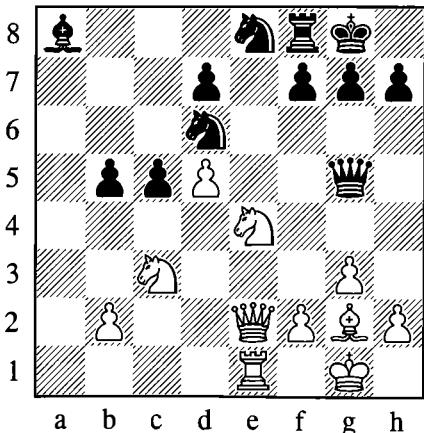
14.a4 a6

14...b4 enables White to claim some squares on the queenside: 15.Qb5 Qxb5 16.axb5 d6 17.Qc4 a5 18.Wd3 a4 19.Wc2 b3 20.Wd3= Grammatica – Semmler, e-mail 2011.



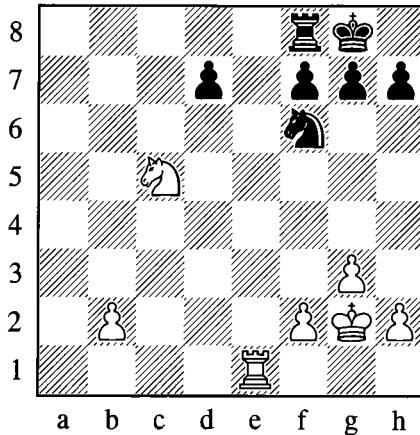
15.axb5 axb5 16.Qxa8 Qxa8 17.We2 Qg5 18.Qxg5 Wxg5 19.Qde4

White has maintained a reasonable initiative for the pawn, but in the following game it did not take long for Black to neutralize the pressure.

**19...Qxe4 20.Qxe4 We7 21.Wxb5**

21.Qxc5 Wxc5 22.Wxe8=

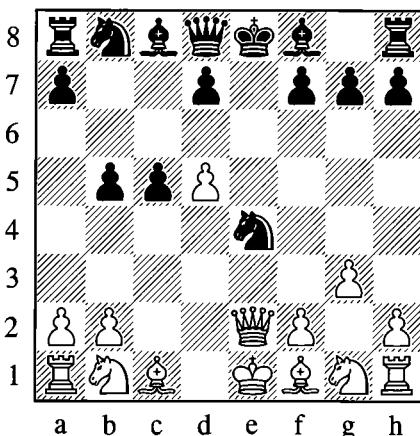
21...Qxd5 22.Wxc5 Wxc5 23.Qxc5 Qxg2 24.Qxg2 Qf6=



25.Wd1 Wb8 26.Qxd7 Wxb2 27.Qxf6†

½-½ Cerrato – Kondratyev, e-mail 2011.

C2) 7.We2



7...We7 8.Qg2

There are many sharp possibilities here, so if you are not well prepared you risk losing without a fight. Black has two playable moves: **C21) 8...Qd6** is a calm attempt to equalize, while the more combative **C22) 8...f5** invites massive complications.

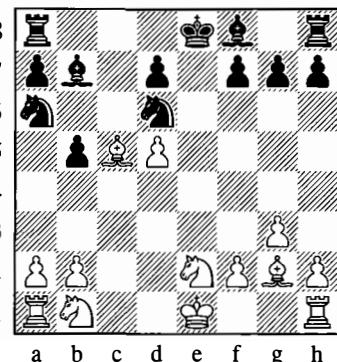
C21) 8...Qd6 9.Qe3 Qa6

There is another option here:

9...Bb7

This may lead to an endgame where Black has to fight for a draw.

10.Qxc5 Bxe2† 11.Qxe2 Qa6



12.Qxd6

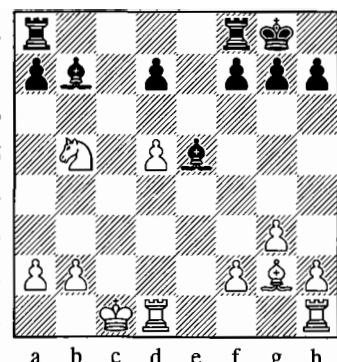
12.Qd4 Qb4 13.Qa3 Qxd5 14.Qxd5 Qxd5
15.0–0–0=

12...Qxd6 13.Qbc3 Qc7 14.Qd4 0–0

The tables have turned and it is now Black who goes a pawn down in return for compensation.

14...b4 15.Qe4 Be5 16.0–0–0†

15.Qdxb5 Qxb5 16.Qxb5 Qe5 17.0–0–0



17...Qa6!?

17...Bfc8† 18.Qb1 Bc5 19.Qd4 Qxd5
20.Qxd5 Bxd5 21.Qf3 Bxd1† 22.Bxd1 d6
23.Qxe5 dx5 24.Bd7± Postny – Gershon,
Israel 2008.

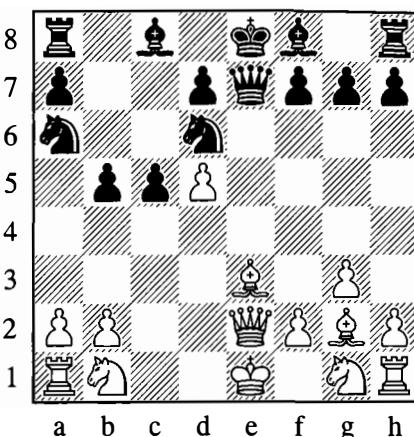
18.Qc3

18.Qd4 g6 19.Bhe1 Bfe8≈

18...Bfc8 19.Qc2 Bab8

Black has compensation, but only enough for a draw, for example:

20.Bhe1 Bxb2† 21.Qxb2 Bxc3† 22.Qa3 Bxe1
23.Bxe1 Qf8=



10.Qc3 b4!

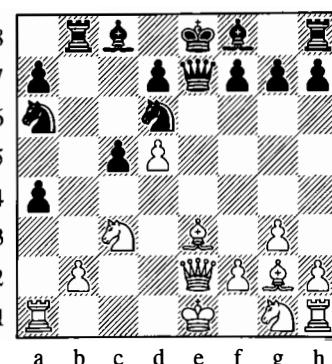
It is worth considering the alternative:

10...Bb8?!

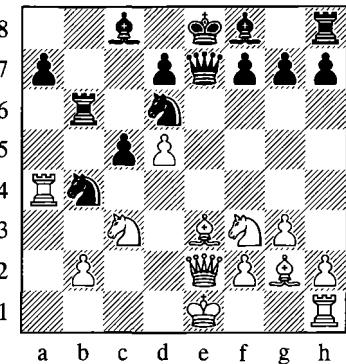
A closer look will reveal this move to be inferior.

11.a4! bxa4

There are no other moves, for instance:
11...b4 12.Qb5 Qf5 (12...Qxb5? 13.axb5
Qc7 14.d6+– Ksieski – Werner, Jena 2008.)
13.d6 Be6 Michalicka – Macak, Slovakia
2012. 14.Bd1N±



12. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6$
 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$?! 14. d6! $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 15. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f5$
 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ +
 13... a5 14. 0–0 $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$! $axb4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}xa6$
 $bxcc3$ 17. $bxcc3\pm$



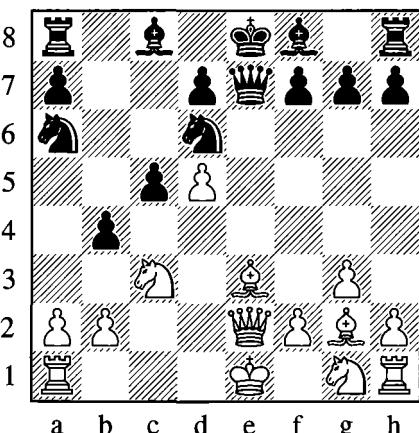
14. 0–0!N

A powerful exchange sacrifice.

The game continued 14. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$? $\mathbb{Q}a6\#$ Wagner – Postny, Aix les Bains 2011.

14... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 15. $\mathbb{W}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ↑
 d6 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

White has a huge initiative.

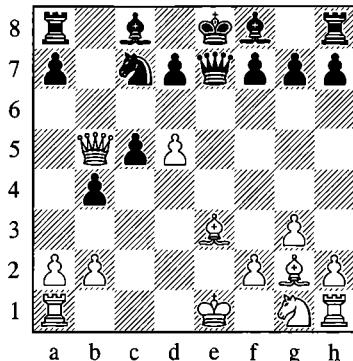


11. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ is riskier, and White must find a few good moves to stay out of trouble. 11... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

12. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ N (12. d6? $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$

14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}a6\#$ Sharevich – Mkrtchian, Paks 2011.) 12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$



13. $\mathbb{W}a5$ (13. $\mathbb{W}d3$?! $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ d6#) 13... d6
 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ g6 15. a3??

11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

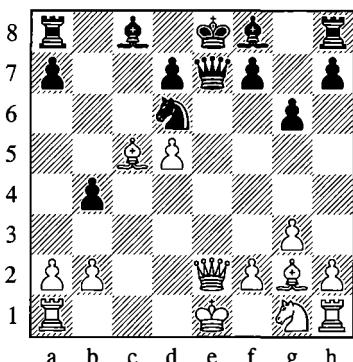
11... g6

Only tested once, this also seems playable.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

Perhaps White could consider delaying this move, which would at least prevent the new idea mentioned below.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$



13... $\mathbb{Q}a6$!N

There is no need to protect the pawn.

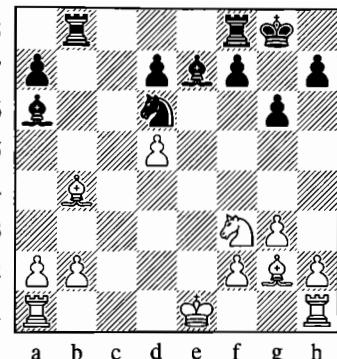
13... a5 14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 15. 0–0–0 $\mathbb{W}xe2$
 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ occurred in Moiseenko – Carlsson, Plovdiv 2008, and here the right continuation would have been: 16... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ N
 17. $\mathbb{Q}hel$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8\#$

14. $\mathbb{W}xe7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$

Now let's see what happens if White becomes greedy.

15.♕xb4?! 0–0 16.♘f3 ♕ab8

White is in trouble.



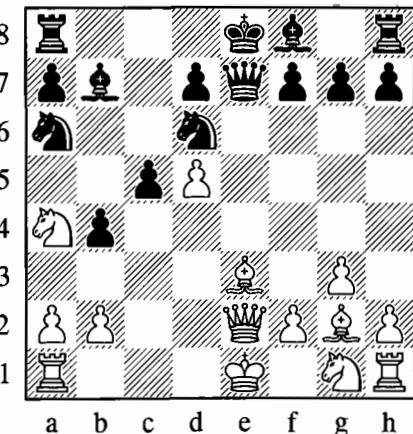
17.♕xd6

17.a3? ♔f6† 18.♕xd6 ♕fe8† 19.♔d1 ♔e2†

20.♔c1 ♕ec8† 21.♔d2 ♕xb2† 22.♔e3 ♕c3†

23.♔f4 ♕xf3 24.♔he1 h6–+

17...♕xd6 18.0–0–0 ♕fc8† 19.♔b1 ♕a3 20.b3
♕c3→



12.♘h3!?

White postpones the capture of the c5-pawn for at least one more move.

12.♘xc5 ♘xc5 13.♘xc5 ♕a6 (13...a5N=)
14.♕xe7† ♕xe7 15.♔c1 0–0 16.♘h3 ♕ae8=

Mikhalevski – Laznicka, Aix-les-Bains 2011.

12.♘f3 g6 13.0–0 occurred in Bluebaum – Bures, Merlimont 2011, and now after

13...♕h6N 14.♔ae1 ♕xe3 15.♕d1 0–0 16.♕xe3 ♕d8 White must prove his compensation.

12...g6

12...f6? 13.0–0 gave White too much play in Sasikiran – Bocharov, Sochi 2012.

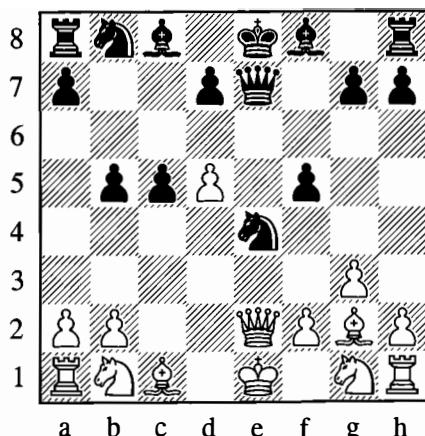
13.♘xc5N

13.0–0?! occurred in Rombaldoni – Aguettaz, Sibenik 2012, and here Black could have obtained an edge with 13...♕h6N, much as in the note to White's previous move.

The text move is better, but White has no more than equality in the endgame.

13...♘xc5 14.♘xc5 ♕xe2† 15.♘xe2 ♘b5
16.♕xf8 ♘xf8=

C22) 8...f5



Although the previous line is playable, the idea of keeping the strong knight in the centre is rather appealing. Of course advancing one's f-pawn before completing development does not come without risk, but I think Black's position is strong enough to justify this ambitious decision.

9.♘h3

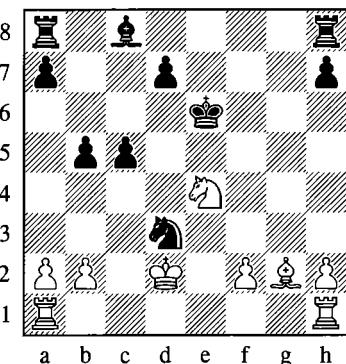
This is the usual move although not many

games have been played, so there is still a lot to explore.

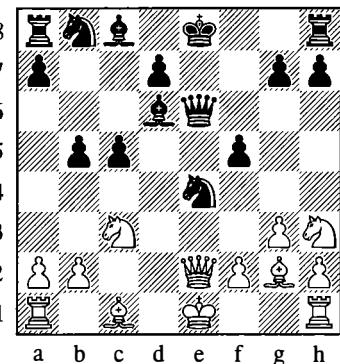
The most popular alternative has been:

9.d6 $\mathbb{W}e6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

11.g4 g6 12.gxf5 gxf5 13. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ leads almost by force to the following endgame: 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ fxe4 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6\#$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d3\#$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ Carron – Mekhitarian, Zürich 2010.



21...d5!N 22. $\mathbb{Q}g5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$



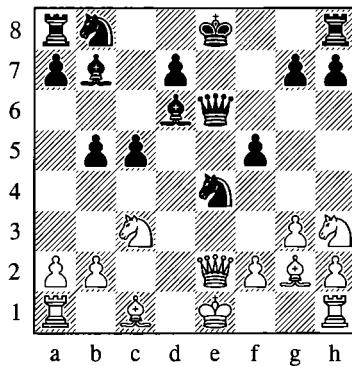
11... $\mathbb{Q}b7!$?

There is no time for prophylaxis here:

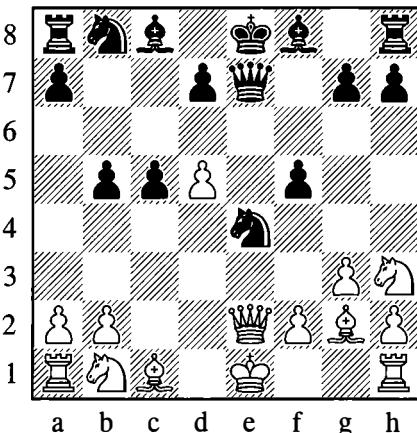
11...h6?! 12.g4!N↑ (12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ fxe4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ hxg5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xh8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}h7$ $\mathbb{Q}b7\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$ $\mathbb{Q}h8!$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xh8\#$ $\mathbb{W}xe4+$ Mahjoob – Jumabayev, Dresden 2008.)

11... $\mathbb{W}c4$ seems playable though. 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe2\#$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ fxe4 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ This was

Hauser – Bergmann, email 2009, and now after 14... $\mathbb{Q}b7N$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1\#$ the position is about equal.



12. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ 0-0
12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13.0-0 0-0 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6$
15. $\mathbb{W}xe6\#$ dxе6 16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{Q}b7=$
13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{W}e7\rightleftharpoons$



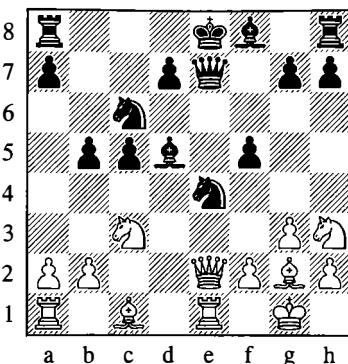
9...b4

9... $\mathbb{Q}b7!?$ N

I didn't find any games with this move, but I think it deserves consideration. White has to sacrifice a pawn, but he develops quickly while the black king remains in the centre.

10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$
12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ c4 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ fxe4
15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 0-0-0∞

The text is more natural. Now Black has a few options and he needs to choose carefully.



12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$

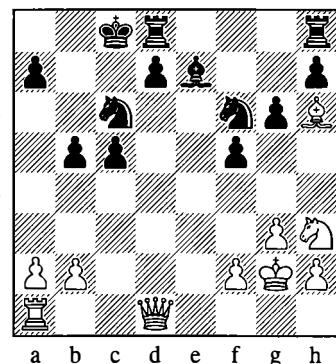
The tempting 12... $\mathbb{Q}c4?$ does not work out so well: 13. $\mathbb{W}d1$ d5 14.b3 0–0–0 15. $\mathbb{W}d2!+–$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$

Here is a funny example showing how a sharp position might lead to an early draw: 13.bxc3 $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ 14. $\mathbb{W}h5†$ g6 15. $\mathbb{W}xe7†$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 16. $\mathbb{W}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 18. $\mathbb{W}h4$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 19. $\mathbb{W}h6=$

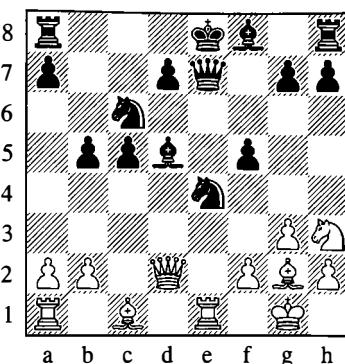
13... $\mathbb{Q}e4$

The safest choice and my recommendation.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xg2!?$ is worth mentioning though: 14. $\mathbb{W}xe7†$ $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d5$ g6 17. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 18. $\mathbb{W}d1$ 0–0–0±



This looks to me like the kind of position that would have appealed to Emanuel Lasker, the second world champion. Lasker often chose to give up his queen for an assortment of enemy pieces, even knowing he was objectively worse, in order to reach an unbalanced position in which he could subsequently outplay his opponent.



14. $\mathbb{W}xd5$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ fxe4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4†$

16. $\mathbb{W}xe4†$ $\mathbb{Q}e7=$

16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{W}xc5$ 0–0 18. $\mathbb{W}xb5$ $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$

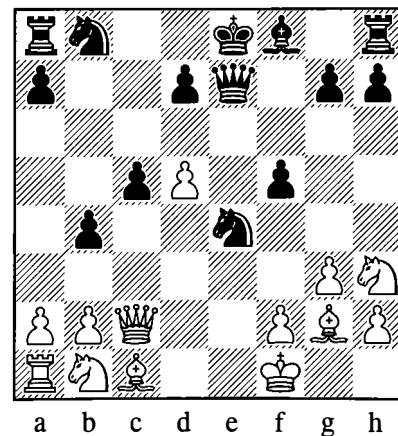
Black has good compensation and most probably will take on b2 with at least an equal position.

Let's now return to the main line. At this point there are three moves worth analysing: C221) 10.0–0, C222) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ and C223) 10.d6.

C221) 10.0–0

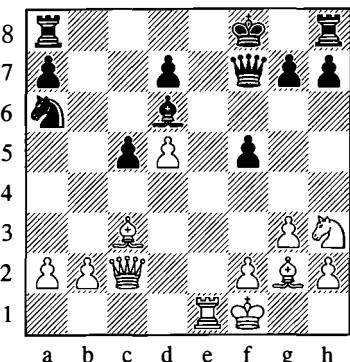
Having already sacrificed a pawn, White now gives up an exchange to ramp up his initiative.

10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$



12...h6

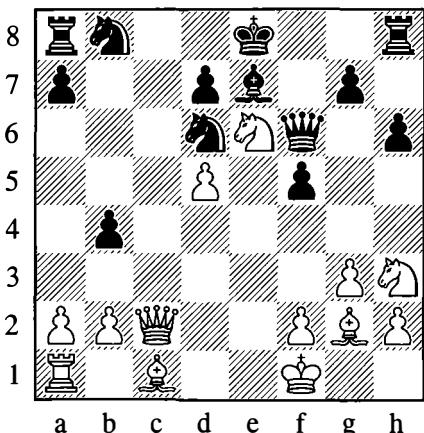
If Black does not take care then he may lose quickly, for instance: 12... $\mathbb{W}f6$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2\#?$ (13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ h6 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ leads to the main line) 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e1\#?$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}f7\#?$



This was Arnaudov – Videnova, Cappelle la Grande 2011, and now 18.. $\mathbb{W}a4!$ N $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ would have enabled the white queen to penetrate to d7 with lethal effect.

13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{W}f6$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e6$

We have been following the game Rojicek – Bures, Czech Republic 2012. From this position many crazy deviations are possible. I think the best move may be:



16... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ N

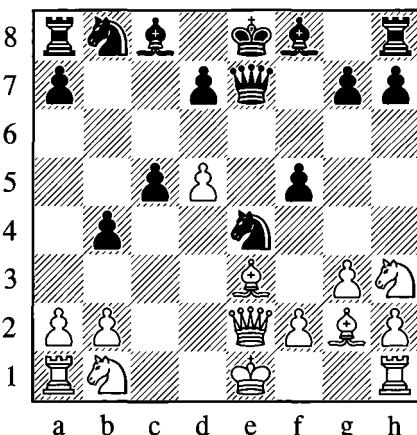
I also analysed 16... $\mathbb{W}xe6!$ N 17. $\mathbb{W}xe6$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ when Black just survives thanks to some tactical resources: 18. $\mathbb{W}c8\#?$ (18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 19. $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 0–0 20. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}g2\#?$) 18... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}b7$ 0–0 20. $\mathbb{W}xa8$ $\mathbb{W}xe6$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xb8$ $\mathbb{W}c4\#?$ 22. $\mathbb{W}g1$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xf1\#?$ 24. $\mathbb{W}xf1$ $\mathbb{W}xb8$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{Q}xg5\#?$

17. $\mathbb{W}a4$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{W}a3$

Also playable is: 19... $g5$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}c1$ 21. $\mathbb{Q}g7\#?$ $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xe1\#?$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ $\mathbb{W}c3\#?$ 24. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{W}c2\#?$

20. $\mathbb{Q}c7\#?$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xa3$ $bxa3$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ $\mathbb{Q}c2\#?$

Black is holding his own in this somewhat messy position.

C222) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 

Here we see a more solid approach from White.

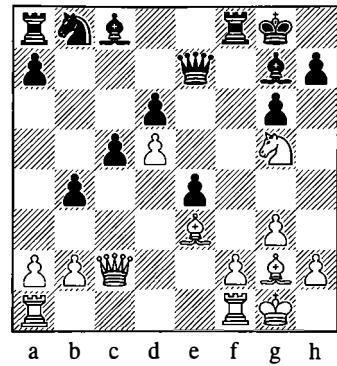
10... $g6$ 11. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $d6$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

This was the latest attempt from the Russian GM Iljushin, who has played this variation twice for White.

A year beforehand he tried:

12.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ 0–0 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{W}xe4$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

Iljushin – Khismatullin, Dagomys 2010.
Now the critical continuation would have been:

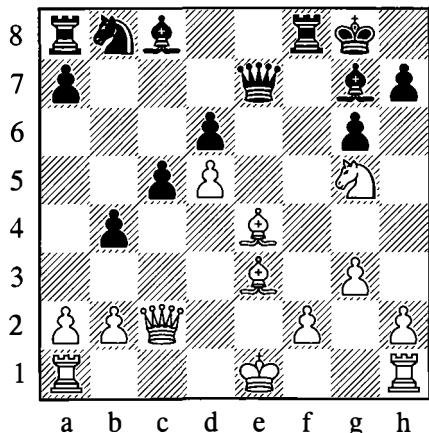


15... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ N

I think Black can take the exchange and there is nothing too scary.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$
19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8\infty$

12... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

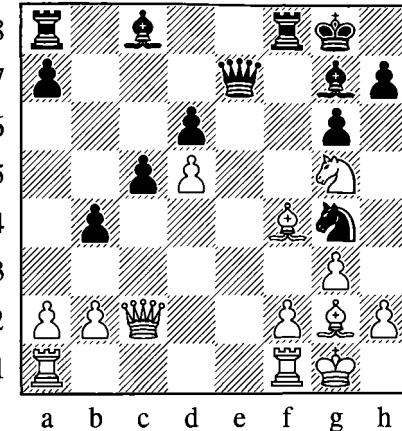


15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$!?

15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ leads to an endgame: 16.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}d8=$ Iljushin – Sharafiev, Moscow 2011. The text move is a good alternative which keeps more pieces on the board, and could lead to some exciting possibilities as shown in the following illustrative line.

16.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

18. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6=$



18... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$!

Opening up the white kingside.

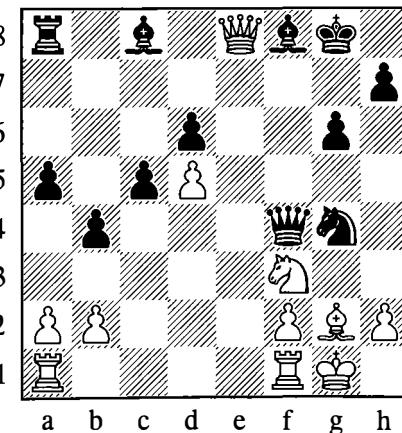
19. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

White has to be careful, for instance 20.h3?
 $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 21.hxg4 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ and Black wins.

20...a5 21. $\mathbb{Q}b5$?

21.h3! is essential: 21... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 24.b3=

21... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



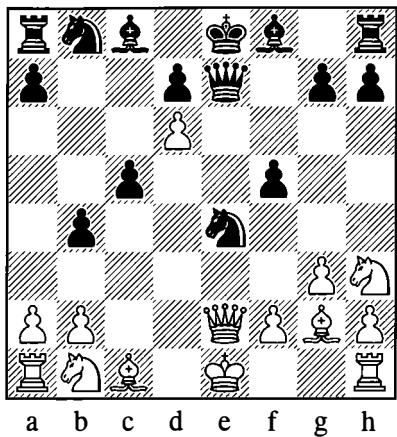
23... $\mathbb{Q}f5!!$

This beautiful move seals White's fate.

24. $\mathbb{W}xa8 \mathbb{Q}e4$ 25. $\mathbb{W}d8 \mathbb{Q}xf3$ 26. $\mathbb{W}h4 \mathbb{Q}xg2+$

Black is winning, since taking the bishop would cost White his queen after a knight check.

C223) 10.d6



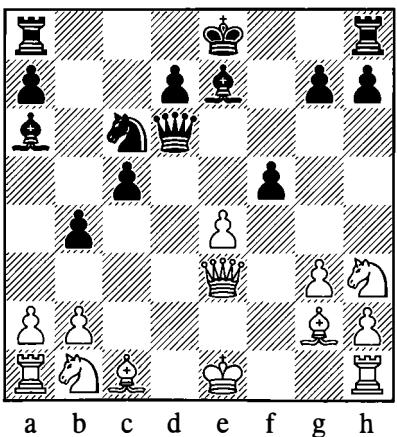
10... $\mathbb{W}xd6$ 11. $f3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e3$

This time White wins material, but his king is stuck in the centre and the black pieces may become extremely active.

12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13. $fxe4$

This position has only been reached in one game, Sosonko – Barle, Ljubljana 1977. At this point I found a useful improvement:

13... $\mathbb{Q}e7!N$



In the aforementioned game Black opted for long castling, but to me it looks more logical to park the king on the kingside, as it will be safer there while the rook will be happy on f8.

14.e5

After the greedy 14. $exf5$ 0–0 Black has a formidable initiative, for example: 15. $\mathbb{W}e4$ $\mathbb{E}ae8$ 16. $\mathbb{W}d5\#$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{E}xf5$ 18. $\mathbb{W}xd6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$

Another possibility is:

14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 0–0 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

White's king remains stuck in the centre and it will take a long time to develop his queenside. Black should be able to win in a few different ways.

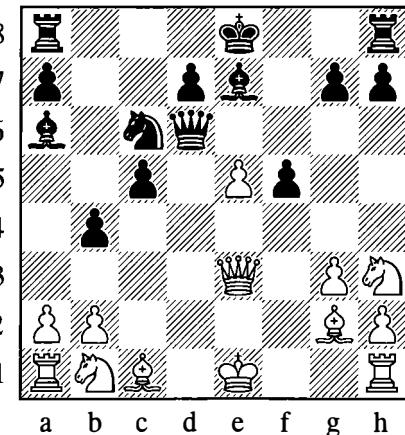
15... $\mathbb{E}ae8$

15... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ should also work, but the rook move is stronger and also brings a certain sense of harmony associated with developing the last piece.

16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Black has a decisive initiative, for example:

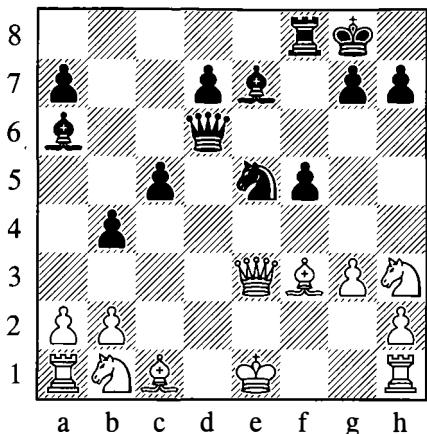
17.0–0 $\mathbb{Q}d4+$



14... $\mathbb{Q}xe5!!$

Welcome back in time to the 19th century, where we will play in the style of the old maestros!

15. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ 0–0 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

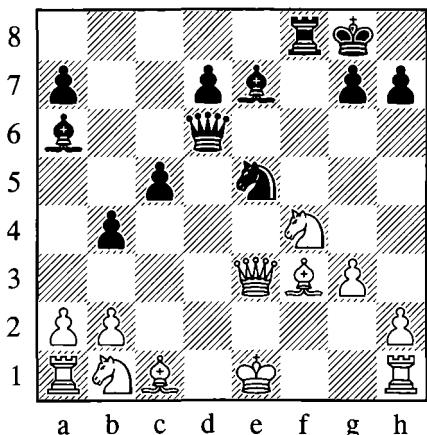


16...f4!

Despite being a rook and a knight down, Black has a crushing attack.

We should not allow ourselves to become distracted by material: 16...Qd3†? 17.Qf1 Qxc1† 18.Qg2 Qd3 19.Qd1 Qf6 20.a3±

17.Qxf4



17...Exf4! 18.Qe2

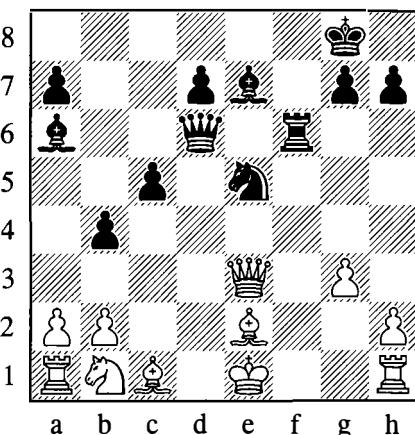
18.gxf4? Qh4† 19.Wf2 Qxf3# would be a lovely finish.

Against 18.Qd2 We6 19.Qe4 almost everything is winning, for example: 19...Qd3† 20.Qd1 Qf2† 21.Qc2 Qd3† (21...Exe4 22.Qxe4 Wc4†

23.Qd2 Qxe4† 24.Qe1 We6–+) 22.Wxd3 Exe4 23.Wf3 Ee2 24.g4 Wg6† 25.Wf5 Wxf5† 26.gxf5 Qxh1–+

18...Eg6!

18...Eg7 also wins, but the lines are more complicated.



19.Qxa6 Wd5!?

19...Wxa6 is also good enough, for instance: 20.Qd1 Qg4 21.Wxe7 Wd3† 22.Qd2 Qf2† 23.Qc1 Qxh1–+

20.Ef1 Exa6 21.Qd2 Eg6 22.Qd1 Qc4–+

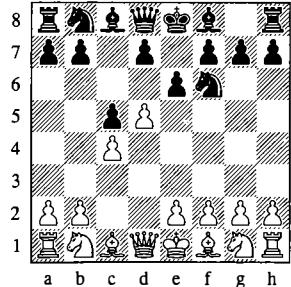
Conclusion

Readers who employ the ‘pure Benoni’ move order may never encounter the variation with an early g2-g3 from White. However, for those who favour the 2...e6 move order, followed by 3.g3 c5 as an anti-Catalan weapon, the 5...b5!? variation is a real possibility. Whether or not you choose it over the standard 5...d6 lines is a matter of personal preference. If you do decide to venture the more ambitious system then you should be well prepared but still expect surprises, as there are many unexplored possibilities.

Chapter 21

Lines without e4

Rare 4th Moves



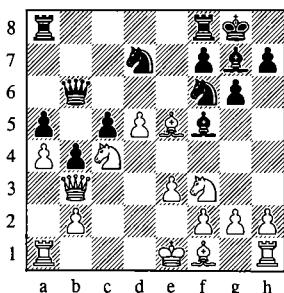
Variation Index

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5

3...e6

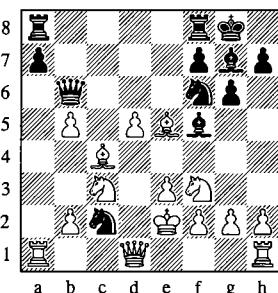
A) 4.dxe6?! fxe6	291
A1) 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$	291
A2) 5. $\mathbb{Q}c3$	292
A3) 5. $\mathbb{Q}g5$	294
B) 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$	295

A2) note to 12...c4



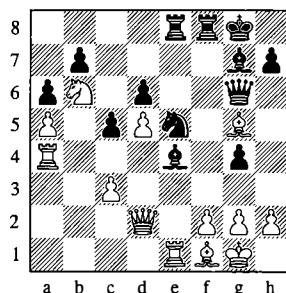
17... $\mathbb{Q}xe5!?$ N

A2) after 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

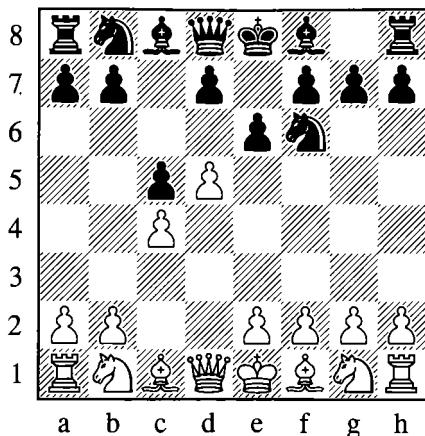


17... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ N

B2) note to 15.h3



28... $\mathbb{Q}xg2!$ N

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6

In this chapter we will round up a few rare and mostly insignificant lines, beginning with **A) 4.dxe6?!** and finishing with **B) 4.♘f3**.

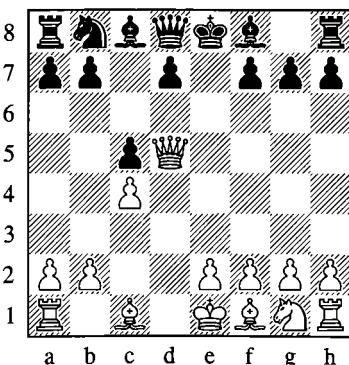
4.♘c3

This move has been the focus of most of the book. We have already covered a few rare lines from this position, and there is not much more to add here.

4...exd5 5.♘xd5?!

5.cxd5 d6 6.♗f4 (Sidelines after 6.e4 can be found in Chapter 14, and various 6.♘f3 lines in subsequent chapters.) 6...g6 Now it is hard to suggest anything other than 7.e4 or 7.♘f3 transposing to normal positions.

5...♘xd5 6.♕xd5



This has been played in close to 300 games,

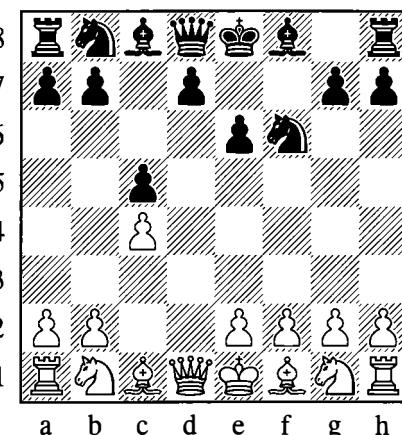
but I see no reason to devote much space to such a timid line. Here is a good example of how Black should proceed.

6...♘c6 7.♘f3 d6 8.e4 ♜e6 9.♗d1 ♜e7 10.♗e2 0-0 11.0-0 ♜f6?

Seidemann – Wolf, Germany 1995.

A) 4.dxe6?!, ♜xe6

4...dxe6? needlessly hands White a slight edge after 5.♗xd8† ♜xd8 6.♘c3 ♜c6 7.♘f4.



The text move is much better, and with a central pawn majority and open f-file it is Black who can fight for the advantage. We will analyse A1) 5.♘f3, A2) 5.♘c3 and A3) 5.♗g5.

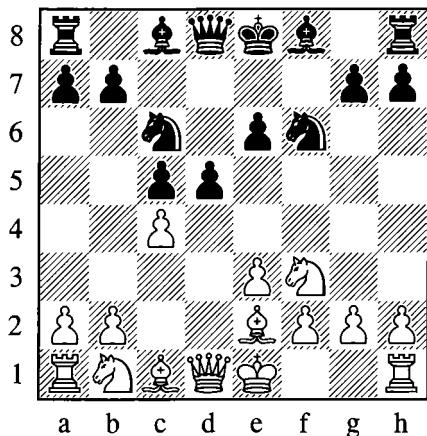
Black has a comfortable game after 5.g3 ♜e7 6.♗g2 0-0 7.♘f3 d5 8.0-0 ♜c6? as seen in Krausser – Sailer, Ingolstadt 1989.

A1) 5.♘f3 d5

Black can get a good position playing almost anything, but taking over the centre is the most logical idea. By the way, 5...b5?! 6.cxb5 leads to the Blumenfeld Gambit Accepted, but there is absolutely no need for it here.

6.e3 ♜c6 7.♗e2

The careless 7.♗c3? allows 7...d4† when the following continuation amused me: 8.♗e2 d3! 9.♗f4 e5! 10.♗d5 e4—+



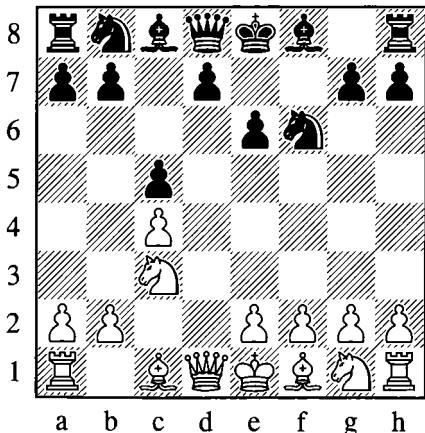
7...♝e7 8.0–0 0–0 9.♗c3?

After the more cautious 9.a3 White is more or less equal.

9...d4! 10.exd4 cxd4 11.♗b5 e5

Black was already winning in Burger – Grab, Wattens 1994.

A2) 5.♗c3



5...d5 6.cxd5

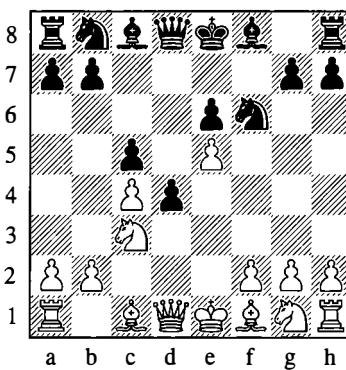
White already has to worry about ...d4 ideas, as the following lines indicate:

6.♗g5 d4 7.♗e4 ♜e7 8.♗xf6 gxf6 9.e3 0–0† Foguelman – R. Garcia, Quilmes 1959. Black dominates the centre and has the bishop pair too.

6.e3 d4 7.♗ce2 e5 8.♗g3 ♜c6 9.♗d3 ♜e7† Black has a comfortable position with more space.

6.e4 d4 7.e5

This is a bit more spirited, but Black has more than one good reply.



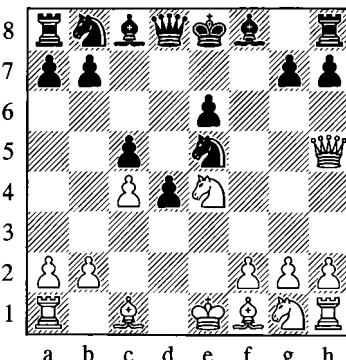
7...♝fd7?

Intending to grab the e-pawn.

Black can also force a slightly better endgame without any risk: 7...dxc3N 8.♗xd8† ♜xd8 9.exf6 gxf6 10.bxc3 ♜c6 11.♗f3 e5†

8.♗e4 ♜xe5 9.♗h5†

9.♗f3 ♜bd7 10.♗xe5 ♜xe5 11.♗h5† ♜f7 12.♗g5 ♜a5† 13.♗d2 ♜b6 14.0–0–0 ♜e7†



9... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5N$

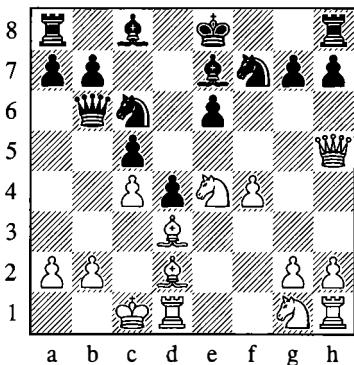
10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ g6+ Korban – Tsiganova, Tallinn 2008.

10... $\mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$

Black is clearly better here, for example:

12.0–0–0 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 14.f4

14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ g6 15. $\mathbb{W}g4$ e5 16. $\mathbb{W}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17.h4 0–0–0+

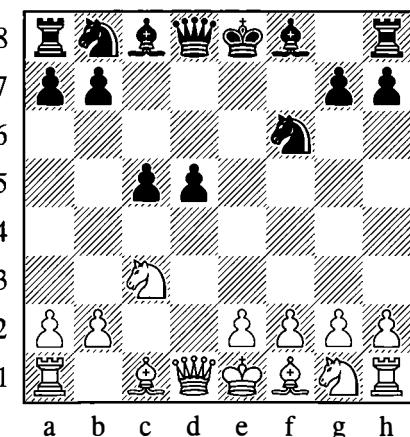


14...e5! 15.Qe1

15.Qf3?? g6+–

15...g6 16.We2 0–0–0+

6...exd5



7.Qg5

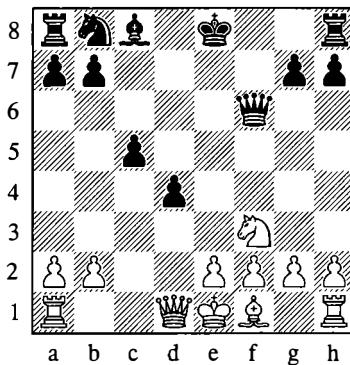
This seems like the logical and principled try, but it just doesn't work. Objectively 7.e3 should be tried, but it is obvious that Black has the initiative.

7...d4

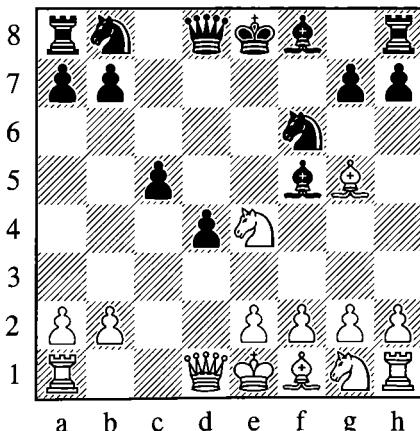
7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ transposes to line A3, but via this move order advancing the d-pawn is more energetic.

8. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f5!!$

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ is also good: 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$ (9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ R. Silva – R. Fernandez, Guarapuava 1992. 9...gxsf6?N 10.e3 $\mathbb{W}a5\uparrow$ 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2\uparrow$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6\mp$) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6\mp$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ Obando – Guimoye, Lima 2002. Here I suggest the following slight improvement:



11... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ N The benefit of delaying castling is seen in the following line: 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ b6 13.e3 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 14.exd4? 0–0–0!–

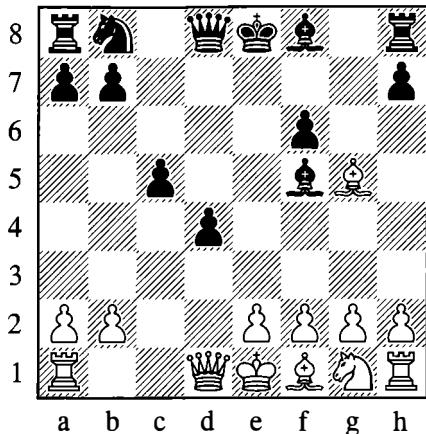


9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6\uparrow$ N

I decided to check this untested move. 9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ was good for Black in Lenders – Bosshard, Zurich 2005.

9...gx6

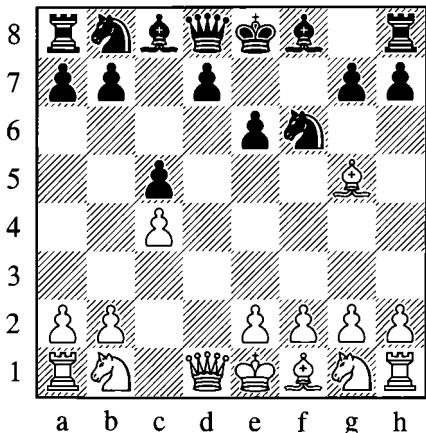
White is already in trouble.

**10.e4!?**

Attempting to complicate the game, rather than play something like 10.♘d2 ♘b6 11.♗b3 ♘xb3 12.axb3 ♘e6 when Black is clearly better.

10...♗xe4 11.♗e2 fxg5 12.♗xe4† ♘e7†

White does not have much to show for his missing pawn.

A3) 5.♗g5**5...♗e7**

5...d5 is not bad at all, but it could be useful to get rid of the pin first.

6.♘c3 d5

Just as in many of the earlier lines, White already has to be careful.

6...0–0 is also not bad, but it allows White to develop: 7.♗f3 ♘c6 8.e3=

7.cxd5

7.♗f3 d4 8.♗xf6 gx6† Hillmann – R. Mueller, Jena 2005.

7...exd5 8.e3

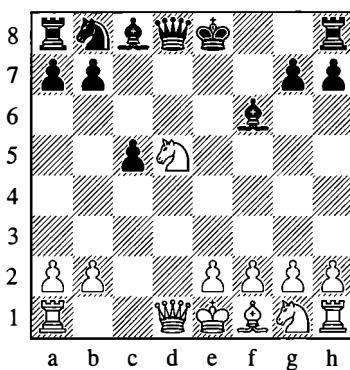
Let's see what happens if White dines on the d-pawn:

8.♗xf6 ♘xf6 9.♗xd5N

9.♗xd5?? ♘xc3† actually occurred in one game which I'm sure White would rather forget.

After 9.♗b3?N White will pay the price for not developing his kingside: 9...♘c6 There are other good moves, but one is enough.

10.0–0–0 (10.♗xd5? ♘a5† 11.♗d1 ♘f5+) 10...♘xc3 11.♗xc3 ♘e7† 12.♗xd5? ♘b4+–

**9...♗xb2 10.♗b1 ♘d4 11.e4**

This can hardly be good for White, but what else is there?

11...0–0 12.♗f3 ♘e8

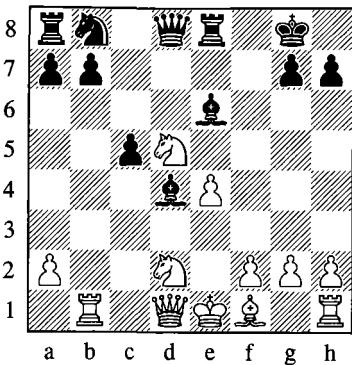
Black is also better after: 12...♗g4 13.♗c4 ♘h8 14.0–0 ♘c6 15.♗e2 ♘xf3 16.♗xf3 b6†

13.♗d2

13.♗c4 ♘xe4† 14.♗e3† ♘h8 15.0–0 ♘c6†

13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Black must avoid 13... $\mathbb{W}xd5?$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xe4\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{W}xc4\#$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4\#.$

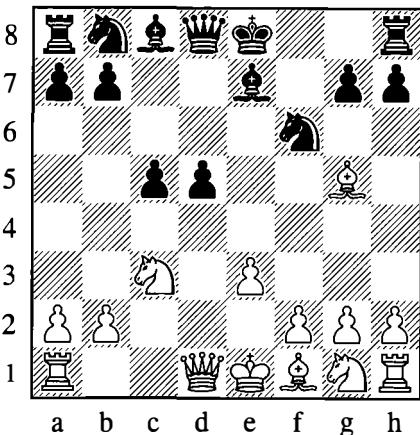


14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{W}f6\#$

14... $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$

The queenside pawn majority and bishop pair offer Black a slight edge.



8... $\mathbb{Q}c6N$

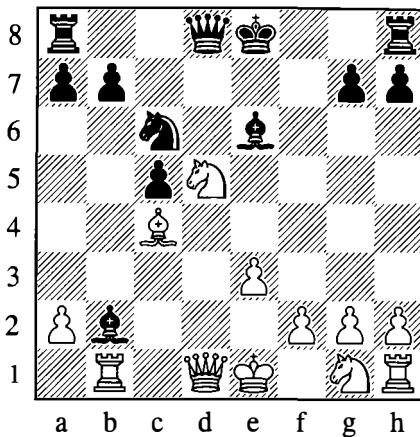
I prefer this over 8...d4, which has the disadvantage of giving the white knight a good square in the centre. 9.exd4 cxd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4N=$ (Rather than 11. $\mathbb{W}e2\#?$ $\mathbb{Q}f8\#$ Busch – Niessen, e-mail 2001.)

9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$

We must destroy the opponent's only active piece.

12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

After 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ White must find some only moves just to survive the opening: 13.e4! (13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ is well met by 13... $\mathbb{W}a5$ 14. $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}b4\#$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2?$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ 14. $\mathbb{W}xd8\#$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8!$ 15.f3 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ (17. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}b8\#$) 17... $\mathbb{Q}c7\#$ Black has a lead in development and can press for a win with virtually no risk.



12...0–0!

Development is the name of the game, and Black can even afford to go a piece down temporarily.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

This wins back the piece immediately.

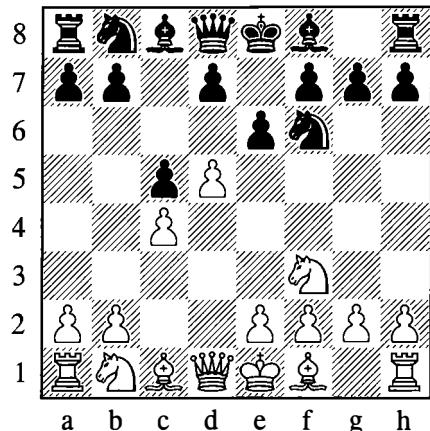
14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

This leads to a tough endgame for White, but it is hard to suggest anything better, for example: 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ c4 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 16. $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$ $\mathbb{Q}f7\#$

14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$ 16.gxf3 $\mathbb{W}a5\#$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{W}xd2\#$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3\#$

Black's extra pawn gives him good winning chances.

B) 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



4...exd5

If you want to save yourself the effort of looking at the remaining pages, you can just play 4...d6! followed by ...exd5, when White is denied the option of a quick e2-e4. Nevertheless I will cover the text move for the sake of completeness, as well as for the benefit of those who may reach the position via a different move order such as 1.d4 e6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 exd5 4.cxd5 ♜f6 5.♘f3.

5.cxd5 d6 6.e4

This is about the only way for White to give independent value to the set-up with ♘f3 instead of ♘c3. He uses the fact that the e-pawn is presently untouchable (6...♜xe4? 7.♝a4†) to do without the knight on c3 for the moment. Still, one has to ask if the knight can realistically hope to find a better square than c3.

6...a6!?

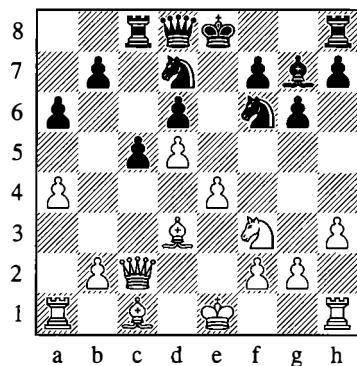
We can borrow an idea from Chapter 16, namely that if White puts his pawn on a4, his queen will not be able to give check on that square.

6...g6 is possible, but after 7.♗d3 ♛g7 8.h3 0-0 9.0-0 White's idea of delaying ♘c3 starts to make a bit more sense. For instance, after 9...b5 White can try 10.♕e1!? to create an

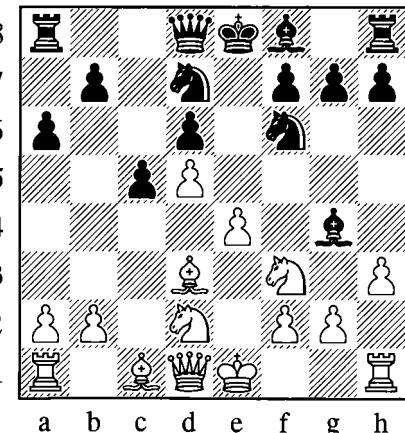
escape square for the bishop on f1 (rather than 10.♘c3 which transposes to the sideline 10.0-0 in the Modern Main Line with 9...b5 – see page 118). This may not be so bad for Black, but it has been tested by some strong players and I see no reason to follow this path when a much simpler alternative exists.

7.♗d3 ♛g4 8.♘bd2 ♘bd7 9.h3

Black is also fine after: 9.♗c2 g6 10.h3 ♛xf3 11.♘xf3 ♛g7 12.a4 ♛c8



Compared with the Modern Main Line, the exchange of Black's problem bishop eases his position considerably. One game continued: 13.♘c4 0-0 14.0-0 ♛e7 15.♕e1 ♛fe8= Garcia Palermo – Granda Zuniga, Benasque 2010.



9...♗e5!N

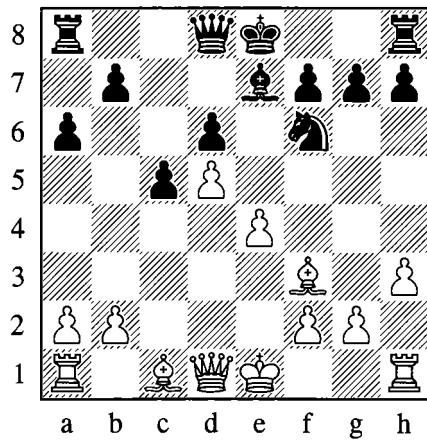
Black took on f3 in Yermolinsky – Shaked, Denver 1998, but I find it more logical to exchange another pair of minor pieces.

10.♕e2 ♕xf3

10...♝xf3† 11.♝xf3 ♕h5 12.0–0 ♕e7 its close to equal, but not much of a Benoni.

11.♝xf3 ♜xf3† 12.♝xf3 ♕e7

12...g6 is playable, but the bishop will soon reach the long diagonal anyway, and this time without any weakening of the kingside.



13.0–0 ♜d7 14.♝f4 ♜c7

Followed by ...0–0 and ...♝f6, with a pleasant game for Black.

Conclusion

You hardly need to do much preparation for any of these lines, but now you can be ready in the event that someone tries to surprise you with one of them.

I hope you enjoyed the book and wish you every success with the Modern Benoni.

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Chapter 1

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8.e5

A) 8...dxe5 10

B) 8... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ dxe5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d6\uparrow$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc8\uparrow$ $\mathbb{W}xc8$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 12

B1) 13.f5 14

B11) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6N$ 14

B12) 13...e4! 15

B2) 13.fxe5 17

Chapter 2

1.d4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.f4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ 0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

A) 9... $\mathbb{E}e8$ 19

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C) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11.h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$ 13. $\mathbb{E}e1$ 23

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C2) 13...c4 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}a5$ 29

C21) 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ 29

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